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Hear from Rattling the Cages creators Eric King, Sara Falconer, and Josh Davidson about creating this oral history project, the importance of inside-outside collaboration, and how replicating these oral histories is something you can do, too. Members of the Certain Days calendar collective, Sara and Josh talk about a quarter century of creating this calendar, building relationships with our political prisoners, and why our support matters.

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RATTLING THE CAGES

ORAL HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

"How We Did It & How You Can Too"

ERIC KING | SARA FALCONER | JOSH DAVIDSON

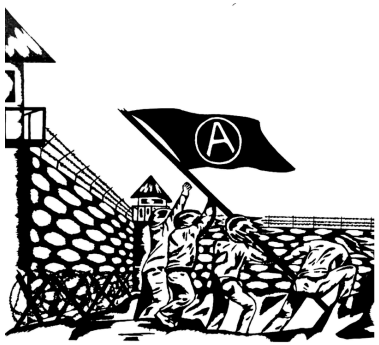
Originally hosted as a live conversation by Firestorm Books, recording available on Firestorm's youtube channel.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCZfcB6hPv4
January 4, 2025

Published by AK Press, *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners* is a project of abolitionists Josh Davidson and Eric King. The book is filled with the experience and wisdom of over thirty current and former North American political prisoners. It provides first-hand details of prison life and the political commitments that continue to lead prisoners into direct confrontation with state authorities and institutions.

Transcription, editing, and formatting by ev, Danielle, Josh, & Jeremy with help from Firestorm Books.

all labor volunteered

with whatever weapons at hand



Rattling the Cages

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Eric King is a father, poet, author, and activist. In December 2023 he was released from the supermax ADX prison after spending nearly ten years as a political prisoner for an act of protest over the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. He was held in solitary confinement for years and was met with violence by guards throughout his incarceration. Eric has published three zines: *Battle Tested* (2015), *Antifa in Prison* (2019), and *Pacing in My Cell* (2019). His sentencing statement is included in the book *Defiance: Anarchist Statements Before Judge and Jury* (2019). Eric now works as a paralegal for the Bread and Roses Legal Center.

Sara Falconer is a communications strategist living in Hamilton, Ontario. She has been creating publications with prisoners since 2001, including the Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners calendar. Sara wrote the introduction to *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners*.

Josh Davidson is an abolitionist, a member of the Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners calendar collective, and also part of the Children's Art Project with political prisoner Oso Blanco. Josh edited *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners*. He works in communications with the Zinn Education Project, which promotes the teaching of radical people's history in classrooms and provides free lessons and resources for educators.

Libertie Valence: Welcome everybody. Thanks for joining us. My name is Libertie, and I'm a member of the Firestorm Collective.

Tonight, we're hosting *Rattling the Cages* co-creators Eric King, Sara Falconer, and Josh Davidson. They're going to be talking about creating this really exciting oral history project, the importance of inside / outside collaboration, and how replicating oral histories is something that you can also do. If you're tuning in for the first time, Firestorm is a 16-year-old radical bookstore owned and operated by a queer feminist collective in southern Appalachia on the land of the Cherokee people. This is actually our first virtual event of the new year, but we're planning lots of great conversations for 2025. So, definitely give us a follow on social media and bookmark our calendar.

Y'all, it's a huge pleasure to have you here! I'm going to go ahead and pass it off to Eric. I know this is going to be a great conversation.

Josh Davidson: Thanks so much, Libertie.

Eric King: Here we go! For everyone tuning in, I really appreciate it. This is a really special one for me because it's a chance for me to interview and have a discussion with not only two people I admire, but two people I consider my dear friends and comrades. I'm happy everyone is joining us. Let's get started.

This is all about political prisoner support. It's all about how we can build closer bonds, how we can make those walls smaller and bring people together better. I'd like for us to start with—you're both two prolific prisoner supporters—so can you tell me how and why you decided this was important to you? I think that would be really helpful for people to learn. Josh!

Josh Davidson: Thanks, Eric. I think, for me, supporting political prisoners started around 2005 or 2006. I like to say I was politically astute enough to find myself in a radical bookstore, but that's about it. It was Red Emma's in Baltimore, Maryland. At the time it was a really tiny basement bookstore. I knocked over this book. It was *Love & Struggle* by David Gilbert, and I sat there in the bookstore and I read it all day. I wrote to him the next day, and, before you know it, we had this great relationship. We were communicating back and forth, and I was making...

Support Political Prisoners

As you've heard & read, it is vital that we support the political prisoners of our liberation movements. Providing support builds bridges across and through prison bars, giving those locked inside a connection to the outside world. Your support matters.

Get involved. Write to a political prisoner—a simple letter provides a needed escape. Visit them in prison. Ask what a political prisoner needs and do what you can to help them. Offer them support.

Visit the NYC Anarchist Black Cross website (*nycabc.wordpress.com*) and learn more about those currently imprisoned for political reasons.

Buy a Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners calendar (*certaindays.org*).

Visit your local Books Through Bars group and send books to those incarcerated (*booksthroughbarsnyc.org/resources*).

Join your nearest Anarchist Black Cross group (*abcf.net*).

Visit *rattlingthecages.com* to learn more.

Write to Political Prisoners mentioned in this conversation

for a monthly updated list of political prisoners & their addresses visit

nycabc.wordpress.com

Eric King: How long did it take him to write back?

Josh Davidson: Maybe two weeks, two or three weeks, which was, during the decade or so we communicated while he was in prison stayed pretty steady during that time. But, yeah, a radical bookstore. I started to write to David. I started to make that trek up to the New York state prisons to see him and to meet him, and every time I visited and asked him what I could do to help, he told me to write to someone else and to see what I could do to support them. Every visit and every letter was this lesson in movement history, and it really expanded my view and my understanding, and eventually that lead to me joining the Certain Days collective, and it lead to me writing to different people and joining different freedom campaigns and trying to support them in any way I could, whether that was the calendar or the book of oral histories.

Eric King: Real quick, you said that you read his book and decided, "I'm going to write this guy." Why? Why did you decide to write him instead of putting money on his books or sending him a book or just thinking about him? What made you decide to write him? Because that's a conscious decision. You have to put a lot of effort into that.

Josh Davidson: Yeah... I don't know. There was something about David that really stuck out. I guess this like Ivy League white guy who had everything going for him but put his entire life into struggle for Black liberation and anti-imperialism...

Eric King: Much like yourself!

Josh Davidson: Well... [*Laughter*]. I don't know about that. But he put his entire life out there to fight imperialism and, yeah, that just really connected with me. Reading the book, seeing the Weather Underground documentary, all of that kind of just lead me to want to reach out to him.

Eric King: Awesome. Sara, if you're ready, same question!

Sara Falconer: Yeah! You know, I love this question, because I'm often on the soap box trying to get people to write to prisoners, so I love talking about how I came to it. Just to start, I want to say thanks to you, Eric, and to you, Josh, for your wonderful work on this book, and for letting me be part of it. I think that it's such an important project. Thanks Firestorm,

too, for hosting this cool series.

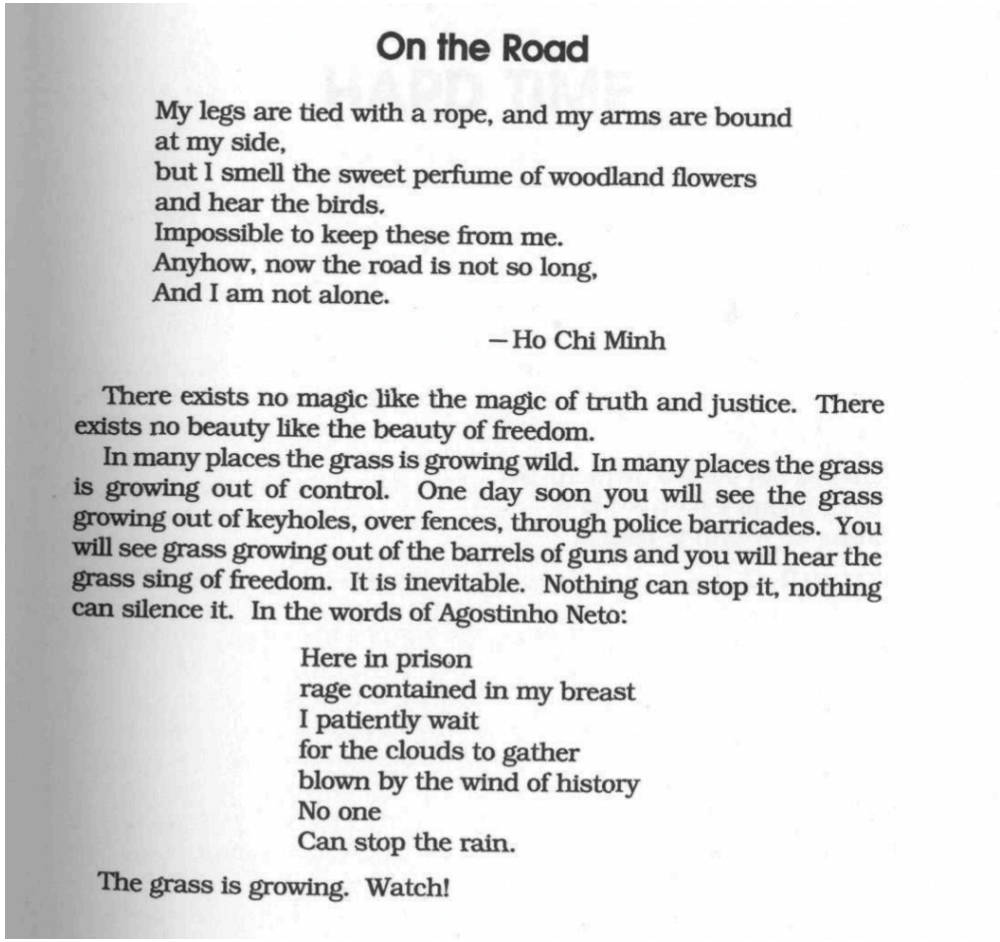
I think, for me, part of what keeps me going as an anarchist and an activist is that connection that we have with people across movements, across locations, around the world, across generations. When I started writing to prisoners around the year 2000, I saw some letters in a punk magazine called *Maximum RocknRoll* that many of you may know from prisoners. I was just very interested in the way these humans were reaching out and that you could connect with them and you could learn so much about people in different walks of life. I think that was the start of it for me.

I came to know the Anarchist Black Cross soon after that. They were not only helping to support young activists who had been imprisoned but also political prisoners who had been in for decades already. I started writing to some of those prisoners. It was through that I really developed politically over they years. The conversations that I was having. You're learning about the Civil Rights Movement first hand from the people that helped lead it. To your point, Josh, to be able to talk to people about their experiences, what they've learned, how they approach things, the mistakes they made, the things that they want to see happen in this world. I found it so powerful to be able to connect at that level and to have that history shape my own political development.

That's how I started to really think that I could play a small part in raising those voices, in sharing that experience with other people, in getting people to either write to prisoners or to read their words or to support their campaigns. That's what's kept me going all this time, that connection that you're always making. You're always growing. I always learn something from the letters that I receive and that I send in, the conversations that we're having.

Eric King: Sara, for you, real quick, when you started—you're in Canada now—were you in Canada then when you started?

Sara Falconer: Yes. It's kind of an interesting situation to be organizing in all these years. In addition to the barriers that we have normally around reaching prisoners, I've also got the border, and the time that it takes to reach people through mail, and the ability to see people in person isn't as frequent as it is in some other areas, too. Yeah, I'm from Canada and did all this work in Canada.



On the Road

My legs are tied with a rope, and my arms are bound
at my side,
but I smell the sweet perfume of woodland flowers
and hear the birds.
Impossible to keep these from me.
Anyhow, now the road is not so long,
And I am not alone.

—Ho Chi Minh

There exists no magic like the magic of truth and justice. There exists no beauty like the beauty of freedom.

In many places the grass is growing wild. In many places the grass is growing out of control. One day soon you will see the grass growing out of keyholes, over fences, through police barricades. You will see grass growing out of the barrels of guns and you will hear the grass sing of freedom. It is inevitable. Nothing can stop it, nothing can silence it. In the words of Agostinho Neto:

Here in prison
rage contained in my breast
I patiently wait
for the clouds to gather
blown by the wind of history
No one
Can stop the rain.

The grass is growing. Watch!

From Assata Shakur's introduction to *Hauling Up the Morning / Izando la mañana: Writings and Art by Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in the U.S.,* edited by Ray Luc Levasseur and Tim Blunk

archive.org/details/hauling-izando

Eric King: Were there any political prisoners or Canadian prisoners that you supported, or were most of them down in the states?

Sara Falconer: You know, the person that I connected with most closely is Ann Hansen. She was a member of the Vancouver 5, a tremendously inspirational person to me who went on to write some really beautiful books about her life and her experiences, and she's always raising the voices of women in Canada's brutal prisons. That connection helped me, I think, to bring that piece of it to home. And then locally, I work with supporting the Barton Prison Solidarity Project, which is the jail that's right in the middle of Hamilton. We work with local prisoners, too. But for the most part, it's been correspondence to the states.

Eric King: Okay, cool. So, something I experienced—and it was really fucking annoying—was the prison putting barricades up between me and the people that supported me. It made it really hard to maintain relationships with people, because, for them on the outside, if you're not getting a letter for a year, you can forget or just move past someone. Right? Thankfully, people like Josh and others stuck with me, but it made it hard.

I would like to know what, if any, difficulties you've all faced? What barriers have you faced? What obstacles have you faced when having to deal with this shit? And then also, how did you deal with them? How do you deal with them in regards to the interpersonal relationship with the prisoner or in navigating the prison?

Josh Davidson: Yeah, good question. I feel like the prison repression and the restrictions have continued to get worse. In terms of organizing, in terms of building relationships, it's become harder and harder. We've found that getting Certain Days calendars into prisons is difficult. We've found that more and more states and/or the federal government are contracting out the letters and having you mail the letter out to some third party place, they scan it, and then they send it in to someone. That not only expands the length of time it takes to communicate with someone, but those letters oftentimes, if there's any color involved, then it's not there, sometimes they only scan the front page instead of the back page as well, so you only get half of the letter. It's very restrictive and very discouraging for people. Even now, I write with Xinachtli, one of the political prisoner members of the Certain Days collective, and the last five

letters I've had returned to me just because they say there's something wrong. I don't know. The address I use is the same thing that's on the BOP website, but they'll find something, and I think that's generally the case. Sara, what do you think?

Sara Falconer: I was just going to agree. It's so arbitrary, honestly. From institution to institution, from place to place, from guard to guard, it's totally random when they feel like they want to play some of these games, in addition to there being actual regulations that are really restrictive for prisoners. You kind of learn to make lots of copies of things, to make sure that you're communicating that you are sending something in. You learn to be a pest to people and say there's nothing against the rules, like, "Can you please send it? Can you tell me why you're not sending it?"

I've sent so many of those letters or those phone calls in my life, just bugging people about it. I think, too, my experience is that for a lot of prisoners, they just have shockingly few resources, and that's a real barrier to communication. Like, pens, paper, stamps, money for phone calls, the basic ways that we can communicate with each other. Those are really restrictive.

And I think that those are some of the things that we can do with our privilege, you know, being outside, to help try and fill some of those gaps in terms of resources. Some of the prisoners that I've worked with in the states have Corrlinks, that kind of rudimentary email system—it's not the full internet, which some people think—but they have a little more access to be able to talk to us. There's nothing like that in Canada, and so that's why it's so important for us to use letters and to try and use the resources we have to get their voices out.

Eric King: This is for both of you. In your experiences, if you can remember, which one caused more problems, state prisons or federal prisons? Because, Josh, you said, Xinachtli, he's in Texas state. I don't know if federal prisoners have more access, or if state prisoners get shut down more—what do you think?

Josh Davidson: Yeah, that's a good question. I think some states are more restrictive than others. The BOP does, though, I think, tend to hold the bar in terms of making things difficult and restrictive. I've never visited a federal prison, but I've visited a few state prisons, and those tend to be

Imprisoned by the US government for expropriating from banks to fund the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), Oso Blanco has been using art to continue his mission. This artwork was created by Oso Blanco after he had been captured in 1999. Proceeds from the sale of these greeting cards will benefit children in the autonomous Zapatista zone of Chiapas, Mexico, and on reservations here on Turtle Island. *freeosoblanco.org/blog/greeting-cards-posters/*

Virgin Island 3 — Abdul Azeez, Hanif Shabazz Bey, and Malik Smith –– a group of activists accused of murdering eight people in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The murders took place during a turbulent period of rebellion on the Islands. During the 1970s, as with much of the world, a movement to resist colonial rule began to grow in the U.S. occupied Virgin Islands. From 1971 to 1973, there was a small scale Mau Mau rebellion taking place on the islands. This activity was down-played by the media, for fear it would damage the tourist industry, which the island's survival depends on. *For more information:* vi3.org

pretty restrictive, too, in person.

Sara Falconer: I think that time is another restriction. That's really hard when you're doing a project—and we'll probably talk about it more throughout this—the time it takes to get letters between us. Like I said already, it's harder, because, by the time it gets through international mail and then to the prisons, you know, that can be weeks and even months if it sits in the mail room for a long time too.

If you're trying to work on a project with somebody, it can get really excruciating to wait for a word from them. If somebody is not well or needs help, and you're trying to get an update on them, that barrier of time, I think, is really something that you just have to be very mindful of. I don't even know if there's necessarily solutions, so much as just being prepared that you have to do things at a different pace. In our projects, I think one of the things that we do is we build trust between people. We're working alongside the prisoners that we're collaborating with, and so you can make decisions. You trust each other a bit. You don't necessarily see the second draft after you've sent us it, and if we have some edits, you might see it, or you might not see it. Do we trust each other enough that a minor edit is going to be okay with you? Like, that's the type of thing, and I think that's true probably in people's personal support, too.

Josh Davidson: That's interesting.

Eric King: Let's talk about the good times! I was very fortunate enough to have some really positive moments with supporters while I was inside, where people and I connected and good things could happen. It made your life feel so much better, because you really felt seen during those moments. What are some moments for you all where it just came together, either it's a victory or a project done or a good connection you developed? And why? Why was that so important?

Sara Falconer: I don't mind going first on this one. I've been blessed to spend time on the outside with political prisoners who have been released —some who I was friends with before they went inside, some who I just got to know through letters and through visits with those shitty vending machines and the tiny little rooms, you know, where we just kind of bond. To be on the outside with people is such a victory and takes so much work from so many people in our movements to make happen that you have to

celebrate that. One of my fond memories is spending time with Seth Hayes when he was released.

Eric King: Oh!

Sara Falconer: He was really, really well-supported by our friends in Buffalo who run Burning Books, the bookstore—speaking of awesome independent bookstores. We got to spend time with him. We got to eat meals with him. We got to go for walks. To see his smile and to make jokes with him and to see the sun on his face. That's a huge victory. That is the type of thing that keeps you going.

I think the other thing for me, too, is those are friends who we love seeing and that keeps me going. I love spending time with Josh and with the other members of the Certain Days calendar collective and people that we can—whether it's us sending a 1,000,000,000 Signal messages to each other, or taking road trips to hang out, or if we happen to live relatively close together, the times that I've been able to organize with collective members that way—we can have fun, even during hard times, we can support each other! To do hard work with people that can make you smile and that you can goof around with a little bit... Between those two things, the big things, the mega victories, and then the day-to-day, being friends with people that you do this work with.

Eric King: How long did you write Seth before he was released?

Sara Falconer: He was one of the first people I wrote to.

Eric King: Oh!

Sara Falconer: That would have been in maybe 2001?

Eric King: Why was he one of the ones? Like, what about him made you want to reach out to him?

Sara Falconer: Well, because he was one of the calendar collective editors on the inside during that time, and I was living in Montreal where the calendar collective was based, and so we were actually able to visit him in upstate New York. We had some in-person visits, we had lots of letters, and we were often coordinating things.

communities. Their educational materials serve as a catalyst for public activism; strengthening movements for social change. Prison Radio's productions illustrate the perspectives and the intrinsic human worth of the more than 7.1 million people under correctional control in the U.S. Mumia Abu-Jamal as a correspondent for Prison Radio has published 2,126 commentaries over the decades, as a continuation of his radical people's journalism. They can be listened to on Prison Radio: www.prisonradio.org/correspondent/mumia-abu-jamal/

Kamau Sadiki — a former member of the Black Liberation Army (BLA), who is currently serving a life sentence for the killing of an Atlanta police officer in 1971. With the US counter-insurgency program COINTELPRO that attempted to neutralize and destroy revolutionary organizations like the Black Panther Party, many members felt they had no choice but to go underground or risk imprisonment and death, which Sadiki did in 1971. In 1973 he was captured as part of a federal stakeout for a bank expropriation and was tried with his co-defendant Assata Shakur—which ended first in a mistrial and after a second trial with a jury acquittal. In 1974, he was tried in another bank expropriation, found guilty, and sentenced to 5 years in prison. During these trials, Assata was pregnant with a child she shared with Sadiki. She would later escape to Cuba. Sadiki's case was part of a renewed campaign during the early 2000s to target former revolutionaries from the 1960s and 70s. Sadiki has claimed his innocence, stating that the government refused to allow testimony that would exonerate him and used his case as a way to pressure Sadiki to help in capturing Assata. Sadiki was convicted and sentenced in 2003. His health continues to deteriorate to this day, and support for his liberation is crucial. *For more information:* freekamau.com

Jalil Al-Amin — formerly known as H. Rap Brown, the Imam came to prominence in the 1960s as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Justice Minister of the Black Panther Party. He is perhaps most famous for his proclamation during that period that "violence is as American as cherry pie," as well as once stating that "If America don't come around, we're gonna burn it down." In 1968, Jamil went underground after facing weapons and incitement to riot charges following a rally that occurred in Cambridge, Maryland which left Jamil with a shotgun wound to the head. After 18 months in hiding and on the FBI's Most Wanted list, Jamil resurfaced in an attack of a New York City bar which was targeted for its exploitation of the community. This action resulted in a shootout with police that left Jamil and two cops with injuries. Jamil subsequently spent 5 years in prison for charges related to the incident. Upon his release, Jamil opened a grocery store in Atlanta, which he maintained until 2000 when he was arrested for the murder of a Fulton County cop. Later that year, another man confessed to the shooting. In 2002 Jamil, was convicted and sentenced to life without parole. *For more information*: whathappened2rap.com

the anarcho-communist Wellspring Communion. Dunne has made the rounds of the federal prison system—including a stint at the infamous Control Unit in Marion, Illinois, where he assisted prisoners with political & academic education. Bill also organizes solidarity runs in conjunction with the Anarchist Black Cross Federation's Running Down the Walls and has edited & written for *4strugglemagazine*. Bill also helped run the newsletter "Prison News Service" from Marion, which was incorporated into the Toronto anarchist prisoner support magazine *Bulldozer*.

Kojo Bomani Sababu — a New Afrikan Prisoner of War, currently serving a 55-year sentence for actions carried out by the Black Liberation Army and attempted escape from prison with Puerto Rican *independentista* Oscar Lopez Rivera. At a very young age, Kojo began to develop a New Afrikan consciousness. Growing up in Atlanta City, New Jersey organizations like the Nation of Islam were strong within the Black community. The organization helped Kojo gain his first experiences in nation-building. In 1968, Sababu crossed paths with the Black Panther Party in Atlanta City. He began to participate in their political education course. In 1972, Sababu was sent to the New Jersey State Prison in Trenton where he met two Black revolutionaries, Kuwasi Balagoon and Andaliwa Clark, who influenced his political development. When he was released three years later, he joined the Black Liberation Army (BLA). In 1975, four members of the Black Liberation Army expropriated funds from the Broad Street National Bank in Lawrence Township, which turned into a shootout with police. Three members of the BLA (Kojo Sababu, Ojore Lutalo, and Larry Anderson) were arrested, while a fourth member was able to avoid arrest, and were charged with possession of stolen property, possession of a dangerous weapon and being a fugitive. In 1976, Kojo was sentenced to two life prison terms for the killings. While in prison Kojo became active in the Inmate Legal Association (ILA), a non-profit legal aid organization that provided free legal assistance to prisoners and which still exists today. In July 1986, three individuals were arrested, and six others were being sought on charges that they were involved in a plot to liberate Puerto Rican prisoner of war, Oscar Lopez-Rivera and Kojo Sababu from USP Leavenworth in Kansas. Among those charged, besides Oscar and Kojo, were Jaime Delgado, Dora Garcia, Claude Marks, and Donna Willmott. In August of 2009, Ojore Lutalo, Sababu's co-defendant from the bank expropriation was released from prison. Sababu, however, remains behind bars for his participation in these actions. He remains committed and unawavering despite his imprisonment.

Prison Radio — an independent multimedia production studio producing content for radio, television, and films for 30 years and distributing throughout the world. Prison Radio challenges unjust police and prosecutorial practices which result in mass incarceration, racism and gender discrimination by bringing the voices of incarcerated people into the public debate. Their radio broadcasts examine core issues that create crime and disenfranchise

He wasn't somebody who edited every single article or was deeply involved in that piece of the process, but he had a vision for the calendar. He had so much energy for it. And, so that's how we got to be friends over the years.

Eric King: I did not know that Certain Days used to be based in Montreal, or maybe still is!

Sara Falconer: It was started in Montreal, yeah. It was people in Montreal who had been visiting Herman Bell, and it was Herman Bell's genius idea. He, to this day, will tell anybody that they are a square. That's his phrase that I love. "You're an absolute square if you don't have a copy of the calendar on your wall." And so this was his idea to have something that would be on people's walls every single day with the words of prisoners, with important dates from our movement history.

And, yeah, it was originally a collective in Montreal. Over the years, it's expanded to New York, Baltimore, Toronto, Hamilton, so many awesome people working on the collective and doing such important work. It's a lot of work, but it's a labor of love and that legacy from the little project that started in Montreal.

Eric King: Josh has told me that he started it out of his basement in Akron. I guess that's not true. Whatever, I guess. [*Laughter all around.*]

Josh, tell me about some of the victories you've had, both big and small, where you just knew, "What I'm doing is a valuable thing, and I'm happy to be doing it."

Josh Davidson: Well, I've been involved with the Certain Days calendar for about 7 or 8 years. Every year, when we create something new and something beautiful that we can send out to people inside and out, it's a victory, and it's a really beautiful victory to be a part of creating something like that. So that's one.

But, like Sara was saying, I think seeing successful freedom campaigns, that's always the main goal, to get people out of prisons. I feel like I was really fortunate to come in at a time when there were a lot of people being released, especially in New York. Sara mentioned Seth Hayes and also Herman Bell and David Gilbert and Jalil Muntaqim and others before

them, like Sekou Odinga. Seeing those people come home after decades and decades is just so encouraging and so rewarding. And then being able to take that relationship that you've created in spite of all that repression and then build from that outside once they're outside, I think that's really something special and something beautiful to be a part of.

Eric King: Have you ever gone to visit someone and got turned away?

Sara Falconer: So, Xinachtli, years ago, I went all the way to Texas—I was traveling for general reasons—but I went all the way to see him at an institution that was really close to Waco at the time. They decided that they hadn't had time to process the papers that I sent 3 months in advance, that sort of thing. It's like 100 degrees standing in the parking lot finding out that I wasn't getting to see him. It was not amazing. I've subsequently had an amazing visit with him in person and got to spend time through the glass. As most people may know, he has been in solitary confinement basically since I started doing this work. I think when he first got put into solitary, we thought he would be in for a few months maybe, and now it's been over 20 years. So, yeah, we had a wonderful visit, but that first time was one of the more low and frustrating points of my life, because you're so powerless, and it shows everything that they can take from us so arbitrarily, too.

Eric King: Josh, what about you? Have you ever been turned away?

Josh Davidson: Once. I was visiting Jalil Muntaqim. He was at Attica in upstate New York. It turns out they put him in the hole for teaching a Black history course. So, yeah, I wasn't able to see him, and it was not a great place to be.

Eric King: No. It is not. I want to ask a flip-side to that question, too, because I think something that happens to a lot of people who do prison support that I've heard is that something will happen, and it'll derail them. They'll stop writing. They'll stop sending books. They'll stop fundraising. They'll lose momentum and support. Has there ever been times when you were supporting anyone that you were just like, "Fuck this." Like, "Goddamn, it's not worth it right now." Or where you wanted to stop, where there was bad times?

Sara Falconer: I mean, if you do it for this long, I think you're going to go

Resistance Conspiracy Case of the mid-1980s. Her sentence was commuted by outgoing president Bill Clinton in 2001. Susan was imprisoned at the Lexington high security unit at FCI Lexington, the first maximum security prison for women in Marianna, Florida, and FCI Danbury, and she also spent time in the DC jail. She was involved in the May 19th Communist Organization, the Puerto Rican independence movement, the movement to Ban the Box, and the successful fight for the release of longtime political prisoner Dr. Mutulu Shakur. Susan published the book *An American Radical: Political Prisoner in My Own Country* (2011).

Rebecca Rubin — Rebecca received a five-year sentence for her involvement with actions committed in support of the Earth Liberation Front during the late 1990s and early 2000s. A shy animal lover from Vancouver, Canada, Rebecca found herself on the run for seven years before surrendering to face draconian charges in the midst of the Green Scare. She served four years and four months and spent several months in various holding facilities and Oregon jails before spending two years imprisoned at FCI Dublin in California, followed by time in a reentry center in Portland and then home confinement. She did not let this time impact her love for nature or her sense of humour.

Jake Conroy — a longtime animal rights activist who was sentenced to four years in prison for his involvement in the Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC USA) campaign. Jake has been involved in various forms of activism since the mid-1990s, working on campaigns both local and international. The SHAC 7, as he and his codefendants became known, were tried as domestic terrorists for running a website and supporting controversial tactics and ideologies. Since his release, he has remained tirelessly committed to the struggle on many fronts. He is currently the host of the Three Minute Thursdays show on his Cranky Vegan YouTube channel and is cohost of Radicals and Revolutionaries, an oral history podcast about direct action movements.

Running Down the Walls — since 1999, prisoners and supporters throughout North America have participated in the annual event known as Running Down the Walls (RDTW), a non-competitive 5K run/jog/walk/roll to raise awareness and funds for political prisoners. Over the years, RDTW has raised thousands of dollars and lots of awareness around the struggle to free political prisoners.

Bill Dunne — Bill is an anti-authoritarian sentenced to 90 years for the attempted liberation of comrades from Seattle's King County Jail in 1979 and for attempting to break himself out of Leavenworth Penitentiary in 1983. Bill was charged with possession of an automatic weapon, auto theft, and aiding & abetting the escape. Charges further alleged the operation was financed by bank expropriations and facilitated by illegal acquisition of weapons and explosives. Bill and his codefendant, Larry Giddings, were accused by police of being members of a small, heavily armed group of revolutionaries," associated with

working-class revolutionaries charged with actions against US military facilities, recruitment centers, and corporate headquarters. These actions were done in solidarity with the people of South Africa and Central America, who were bearing the brunt of US imperialism. Ray spent twenty-one months imprisoned in Tennessee State Penitentiary in Nashville and at Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary in Petros, Tennessee, between 1969 and 1971, before spending twenty years imprisoned from 1984 to 2004 for his actions with the UFF. Ray has published three zines—*Family Values*; *Letters from Exile*; and *The Trial Statements of Ray Luc Levasseur*—all of which are to be republished by Kersplebedeb and Burning Books in 2025.

Linda Evans — an anti-imperialist political prisoner for 16 years, and before her imprisonment she was involved in many organizations, including Students for a Democratic Society, the Weather Underground, and the May 19th Communist Organization. She was captured in 1985 and convicted for her part in the Resistance Conspiracy Case. Her sentence was commuted by outgoing president Bill Clinton in 2001. Linda was imprisoned at various jails, including the DC jail and FCI Dublin. Since her release, she has co-founded All of Us or None, a grassroots civil rights organization of formerly incarcerated people and their families, and she works tirelessly with California Coalition for Women Prisoners, the Drop LWOP Coalition, the Immigrant Defense Taskforce of North Bay Organizing Project in Santa Rosa, and the successful campaign to free Dr. Mutulu Shakur. Along with her partner Eve Goldberg, Linda wrote The Prison-Industrial Complex and the Global Economy (2009).

Laura Whitehorn — Linda served almost 15 years in high security federal prisons for her involvement in the anti-imperialist armed actions that culminated in the Resistance Conspiracy Case of the mid-1980s. She served time at the Baltimore City Jail, the DC jail, FCI Lexington, FCI Alderson, FCI Dublin (then called Pleasanton), and the high security unit in Marianna, Florida. Laura was involved in anti-imperialist organizations including the Weather Underground Organization (WUO) and the May 19th Communist Organization, and rights and AIDS support groups. Since her release at the turn of the century, she has been involved in a number of causes including campaigns to free political prisoners and is a cofounder of Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP), a community based organization founded and led by formerly incarcerated people and family members. Laura edited and wrote the introduction for *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther, Keeping the Faith in Prison and Fighting for Those Left Behind* (2010) and wrote the introduction to Victoria Law's *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women*. She and her partner, the writer susie day, participated in a prison, labor, and academic delegation to Palestine in 2016.

Susan Rosenberg — Susan spent 16 years in high security federal prisons for her involvement in the anti-imperialist armed actions that culminated in the

through ebbs and flows in your life and in your energy that you have for it. If anything, over the years, I've been kind of bad at recognizing my own capacity to do things and saying yes to too many things. And so then I would miss deadlines or not follow through on things that I said I was going to do, and that would be really paralyzing to me, as it is to many of us. Now that I've had more years to kind of get to know that part of myself and to really recognize how much people are counting on us when you say you're going to do something, I think I'm better at not overcommitting and being real when I need to take a bit of a break. You know? Like, I can't write every week or whatever it is. It's been a long time since I could furiously write tons of letters every week, and there's a time that I did. But, I think that that was part of growing.

This is the thing. You are building a relationship. You are friends with people. And if you can be honest with them and say, "I'm going through a rough time…" I had people like Marilyn Buck support me more than I think I was able to support them. She was such a such a wonderful mentor to me and such a wonderful inspiration. Yes, I was doing things to get her writings out and things like that, but I was getting advice from her because I was a young person, and I was, like, "Man, I am falling apart here," and she would give me such cool advice, you know? You are building relationships with people who have so much to give back.

Eric King: So I want to just backtrack real quick. You wrote and had a relationship with Marilyn?

Sara Falconer: Yeah. I mean, we weren't super, super close, but we wrote for a number of years. She actually helped me with some of my thesis research, so that was 2003 to 2004. Years ago. And, yeah, she was a wonderful person. I wish I had more of a chance to know her when she was on the outside, but, you know, she was quite sick when she was released, so we didn't have that chance.

Eric King: Do you still have those letters?

Sara Falconer: I do. I have a kind of ridiculous quantity of letters from over the years. Every now and then I look at the pile, which is completely unorganized. It's literally just boxes of letters, where I was like, "Okay. Those are the letters." And then I would move to another place. I don't know. There's some gems in there, I think.

Eric King: I am so fascinated by this. We might touch back on this also. We might circle back. Josh, what were some of your hard moments or times you were like, "This fucking sucks?"

Josh Davidson: I think it's related to what Sara was saying about knowing your capacity and knowing what you can handle and what you can work on at a particular time. These are people that are locked in a cage for sometimes 23 hours a day. They can use all the support that they can get, but they also, I think it's fair to say, everyone in there needs to know your level of commitment and your level of involvement. If it's something you can't commit to, then I think being honest about that is very important. I can't think of particular obstacles that have prevented me from doing the work. I always try to...

Eric King: You can't think of any?

Josh Davidson: ...move it forward. Eric, when you were on a mail ban, there was a year and a half where we couldn't communicate together. That was hard. But I took that opportunity to reach out to another political prisoner who you and I had talked about quite often, Oso Blanco, who's an Indigenous political prisoner serving time for robbing banks and sending all the proceeds to the Zapatistas. Out of that, we've built this great relationship, and I've been able to help him create these greeting cards, these really beautiful greeting cards that are available at Burning Books. They're by Indigenous artists in prison. We sell the greeting cards, and we send all the money down to the Zapatistas. So, it's a way of him continuing his work in spite of the prison bars and the repression. So, no. I know I'm fortunate in saying that. Plenty of people have faced that and have stopped working because of it. But, yeah, I don't know if that answers your question.

Eric King: Why did you start writing me?

Josh Davidson: Why did I start writing to you?

Eric King: Yeah.

Josh Davidson: A former political prisoner, Daniel McGowan. He said that he thought that you and I would get along.

Zinn Education Project — a project that promotes and supports the teaching of people's history in classrooms across the country, modeled after socialist historian Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States and A Young People's History of the United States. *For more information:* www.zinnedproject.org/

Leslie James Pickering — inspired by the animal liberation movement, Leslie began to study radical and revolutionary movements of the past. His studies led to his eventual involvement in an organization known as the Liberation Collective in Portland, Oregon. When the organization received a communique from the Earth Liberation Front, co-founder Craig Rosebraugh and Leslie established the North American Earth Liberation Front Press Office (NAELFPO) in 1999. Leslie currently is a professor at Niagara University, specializing in social and environmental rights. Leslie has published the books, *The Earth Liberation Front: 1997–2002*; *Mad Bomber Melville*, a biography of the revolutionary Sam Melville, and *Conspiracy to Riot in Furtherance of Terrorism: The Collective Autobiography of the RNC 8*, as well as many zines.

Sekou Kambui — Sekou is of Afrikan/Cherokee heritage, born in 1948, in Alabama. Throughout the 1960s, Sekou participated in the Civil Rights Movement, organized youth for demonstrations and marches across Alabama and providing security for SCLC, CORE and SNCC. Sekou has been an active jailhouse lawyer and prisoner rights activist for more than 20 years. Sekou joined the Black Panthers in 1967. While in Detroit, he became a member of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), before returning to Birmingham, Alabama. Sekou worked with the Alabama Black Liberation Front, the Inmates for Action (IFA) defense committee, and the Afro-American Peoples Party in the mid-1970s. Sekou was falsely arrested on January 2, 1975 and charged with the murder of two white men; a KKK official from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and an oil millionaire from Birmingham. Sekou was convicted on both trials and sentenced to life in both cases. While behind bars, Sekou steadfastly continued his social activism. He initiated legal efforts around medical malpractice, over-crowding, and other abusive prison conditions. He formed and led a Social Consciousness Group which provided cultural and political education for fellow prisoners. His dedication to justice touched people wherever he went. Unfortunately, only weeks after his release, he was diagnosed with cancer. Despite his illness, Sekou was able to participate in a national tour with the Red Flame of Freedom, and attended the first national conference of the Formerly-Incarcerated and Convicted Peoples' Movement. Sekou bravely coped with his illness until his death on May 10, 2017.

Ray Luc Levasseur — a member of the United Freedom Front and the Sam Melville–Jonathan Jackson Unit who spent over 20 years in prison. The group known as the Ohio 7—Ray, Patricia Gros Levasseur, Barbara Curzi-Laaman, Carol Saucier Manning, Tom Manning, Jaan Laaman, and Richard Williams—were

radical change. She is a mentor with the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizer Training Program and a member of the Catalyst Project.

RAF — The Red Army Faction was an anti-imperialist communist underground guerrilla group of West German revolutionaries who carried out armed actions against US imperialism. The RAF engaged in a series of bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, bank robberies, and shootouts with police over the course of three decades. Early leadership included Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin, and Horst Mahler. The RAF emerged from the 1968 student protest movement in West Germany and was formed with the intention of complementing the plethora of revolutionary and radical groups across West Germany and Europe. In 1970 after Ulrike and others freed Andreas from custody, many of the RAF traveled to Jordan where they trained with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) guerrillas and looked to the Palestinian cause for inspiration and guidance. After the arrest of the revolutionaries of the first generation of the RAF, they were held in solitary confinement in the newly constructed high security Stammheim prison, where the counter-insurgency tactics of solitary confinement were developed before being exported to the US. To protest against their treatment by authorities, they went on several coordinated hunger strikes. Eventually, they were force-fed, and Holger Meins was killed of starvation. The second generation of the RAF emerged in 1975 with series of armed actions that culminated in the so-called "German Autumn" of 1977 when a former Nazi capitalist was kidnapped by the RAF with demands to free the RAF prisoners. The German state did not relent, and the situation escalated after a Palestinian / RAF operation hijacked a German airplane (all of the guerrillas were killed by German police), the three main RAF prisoners (Andreas, Gudrun, and Ulrike) were most likely murdered, and the Nazi capitalist was killed in retaliation. The RAF continued operations well into the 1990s, and former RAF guerrillas, like Daniela Klette, continue to be discovered and imprisoned even into the 2020s.

Angela Davis — a Black Marxist and feminist political activist, philosopher, academic, and author. A longtime member of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), she was also affiliated with the Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party, while a philosophy professor at UCLA. A leader in the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee, after Jonathan Jackson attempted to liberate the Soledad Brothers through an attack on the Marin County Civic Center in 1970, an arrest warrant for Angela was issued after it came to light that she had bought several of the guns Jonathan used in the attack. She was captured by the FBI and released on bail after a 16 month international "Free Angela" campaign. Angela was acquitted of the charges in June 1972. Angela was twice the Communist Party's candidate for vice president. In 1997, she co-founded Critical Resistance, an organization working to abolish the prison industrial complex. Angela's books and theories are a foundation in the prison abolition movement.

Eric King: [*Jokingly*] Never heard of him!

Josh Davidson: [*Laughter*] And he was right. We built this great relationship—and it's not the case with all of them. You know? I think you and I were fortunate, and he was right that we do have a lot in common. The letters that you and I shared were, I think intimate is the wrong word, but we were very honest with each other and very upfront about ourselves and our lives. I think that I've said this in other talks we've done, but, whatever you put into it is what you'll get out. You know? Whatever you put into building a relationship with someone behind bars is what hopefully they'll put into it as well.

Sara Falconer: And I think that's not to scare people away, either from... If you are like, "I don't have a lot of capacity right now. I'm going to write a letter of solidarity, because I heard this person got transferred or they're in the hole," or whatever it is, and you're like, "I'm going to write to this person." It is totally fine to say, "I'm thinking of you. Sending some love from snowy-ass Canada. I don't have a lot of capacity right now, but let me know if you need anything, and we can stay in touch." Not everybody has to completely dive in and make it their second full time job and then some, like Josh and others have.

And so, I think it's more being realistic, being honest. Like, in daily life, I think you can over-commit and say, "Yeah. I want to go to that party," when you totally don't want to. With this you have to have a little bit more foresight about it, because people are really counting on you. That's the main thing. If you say you're going to do something, do it or make it very clear if something changes.

Eric King: For those who don't know, Josh started writing me while I was in the SHU at Leavenworth. I had just got attacked by the lieutenant, and they were waiting to see if they were going to prosecute me or not. And I got Josh's letter shortly before my first phone ban happened. Having that person where I could write and ask for things specifically, and then they would send that shit in made a really big difference, because a lot of people would over-commit. They would do the thing where they say, "If you need anything, you let me know." And then I'd ask for, like, lyrics to a song, and I'd never hear from them again. So having someone...

Sara Falconer: Important question. Was it a Taylor Swift song?

Eric King: That's not important. It's not relevant.

Josh Davidson: It was a full Taylor Swift album. [*Laughter all around.*]

Eric King: But that shit made a big difference for me, because I'd say one out of every ten people actually follows through with what they say they're going to do. And maybe that's the same in the free world, too, but, inside, having that one made a really big difference. Also, when people would do what you just said, Sara, when folks would tell me ahead of time, "I can't write back. I'm just sending my love." That would help me a lot, because then you don't have unrealistic expectations, because it hurts when you think that you have a bond with someone and then they essentially ghost you.

Sara Falconer: Mhmm.

Eric King: And that sucks. Like, that hurts really bad. So, I like that you said that, setting out, like, "This is what I have." I think that honestly goes a long way.

Have you two ever been ghosted by a prisoner, where they quit writing you or got mad at you?

Sara Falconer: There's people that I didn't stay in touch with. You know, they were getting support from other people, and we just didn't click. The way you talk about… Like, there's people that I think in the beginning, because I wrote to quite a few people… Over time, I just kind of narrowed into the people that I really connected with or who really particularly wanted to work on projects or needed something. There wasn't anything where I was just like, "Wow. I'm never speaking to this person again," or vice versa. You kind of just drift a little bit. But even some of those folks, I would try and send them, when you could still send, holiday cards in. That was one of my great joys, getting a whole bunch of people together and sending cards in around the holidays. Just a little bit of brightness to let them know that you're thinking of them. And so, usually, once a year, I would still send something to people, but, you know, you can still send the black and white ballpoint pen letter with no drawings to most institutions.

Eric King: At your most, how many people were you writing at a time? At

addiction using acupuncture. Dr. Shakur was one of several Black Liberation Army members to carry out the October 1981 Brinks robbery, aided by the May 19 Communist Organization and former members of the Weather Underground. In June 2022, it was revealed that Dr. Shakur had terminal bone marrow cancer with "six months to live." Dr. Shakur passed away from the disease on July 7, 2023, at age 72, about eight months after being paroled.

Russell Maroon Shoatz — a Black revolutionary and member of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) who escaped multiple times from prison, earning the name "Maroon." Maroon grew up in Philly and as a part of his gang activities spent his youth in and out of reform schools and youth institutions. During the early and mid-60s, Maroon become politically active in the Black liberation movement, co-founding the Black Unity Council, which later merged with the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1969. In August 1970, at the height of the state repression of the Black liberation movement, Maroon and four others became fugitives ("The Philly 5"), after a police officer was killed in a retaliatory attack on a Philadelphia police station. From August 1970 to January 1972, the date of his capture, Maroon was active on the armed front of the Black Liberation Army. Maroon was sentenced to life after his capture and conviction. In September 1977, Maroon three other Black prisoners liberated themselves from the Huntingdon state prison in Pennsylvania. Two of them were recaptured, another was killed, but Maroon remained free for a month, fleeing from a massive "slave hunt" by local, state, federal, and militia forces. In March 1980, Maroon and another Black political prisoner of war liberated themselves after a Black activists smuggled a revolver and sub-machine gun into the institution. All three were captured after a gun battle with local, state, county, and federal forces. Despite enduring over 22 consecutive years of solitary confinement, Maroon organized liberation schools in the prisons, and remained a committed freedom fighter. Maroon was granted compassionate release in 2021, after suffering from cancer. Maroon passed away less than two months later, on December 17. Maroon is the author of *Maroon the Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russell Maroon Shoatz, The Dragon and the Hydra: A Historical Study of Organizational Method*, and an autobiography, *I Am Maroon: The True Story of an American Political Prisoner.*

Donna Willmott — in 1969, Donna traveled to Cuba as part of the first contingent of the Venceremos Brigades. Donna worked with numerous groups to implement revolutionary change and was supportive of political prisoners before her own arrest. In 1985, Donna and others were arrested in connection with a planned escape attempt of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera. In 1994, after spending nine years underground, she and her codefendant turned themselves in, and Donna subsequently served twenty-seven months in prison at MCC Chicago and FCI Dublin, followed by six months in a halfway house in San Francisco. Since her release, she has worked tirelessly to abolish solitary confinement and ensure that younger generations continue efforts for

Tom Manning — an anti-imperialist revolutionary and member of the Sam Melville / Jonathan Jackson Unit, later known as the United Freedom Front (UFF), which conducted sabotage, expropriations, and attacks against profiteers and symbols of American imperialism in support of global anti-colonial struggles in the 70s and 80s. As a youth, Tom shined shoes, raised pigeons, and joined the military in 1963, where he was stationed at Guantanamo Bay and in Vietnam. Tom was sentenced to five years in prison for armed robbery and assault some time after 1965. Tom credits these years for his deep politicization through interactions with other prisoners. After going underground with his wife Carol as a part of the UFF, Tom, Carol, Ray Luc Levasseur, Patricia Gross, Richard Williams, Jaan Laaman, and Barbara Curzi, who came to be known as the Ohio 7, were captured after the largest manhunt in New Jersey history. Tom was sentenced to 58 years in federal prison for his role in killing a police officer and the UFF bombings. Tom died in 2010 after more than 30 years in prison where he continued to struggle until the end. Tom's artwork is featured prominently in the political prisoner writing and art collection *Hauling Up the Morning*, edited by Ray Luc Levasseur and Tim Blunk, with an introduction by Assata Shakur.

IRA — The Irish Republic Army was a revolutionary organization that fought a guerrilla war against British settler-colonialism from 1919 to 1921. The IRA was descended from the Irish Volunteers, founded in 1913, who staged the Easter Rising in 1916, which aimed at ending British rule in Ireland, a rebellion that was brutally suppressed. Following a treaty with the British in 1921 that ended the war of independence, a split occurred within the IRA between members who supported the treaty (Irish National Army), and the majority opposed to the treaty (IRA), who fought a civil war against the Free State Army in 1922–1923, with the intention of creating a fully independent all-Ireland republic. In the decades following the defeat of the IRA, various guerrilla organizations would continue to struggle for independence, such as the eruption of guerrilla warfare during the so-called Troubles from the late 60s to the late 90s. Captured members of the IRA and Irish republican political prisoners waged fierce battles for recognition as political prisoners against the British government, such as the 1981 hunger strike which left Bobby Sands and 9 other prisoners dead from starvation.

Dr. Mutulu Shakur — a Black Liberation Army political prisoner who was sentenced to 60 years in prison for his involvement in the Brinks robbery. Dr. Shakur was active as a teen in the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), a Black Nationalist group that struggled for Black self-determination and socialist change in America. Dr. Shakur also worked very closely with the Black Panther Party, supporting Lumumba and Zayd Shakur. He was a member of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, which endorsed the founding of an independent New Afrikan (Black) Republic and the establishment of an independent Black state in the southern US. In the 70s, Dr. Shakur worked with the Lincoln Detox program, which offered drug rehabilitation for heroin

your peak, your pinnacle.

Sara Falconer: I mean, for those things, I would've taken the New York ABC list, which is comprehensive and always up to date. At certain times, it had 75 people on it. I would have written something to all those folks–– not writing something to all of them saying, like, "Hey. Let's be pen pals every day," but, like, "How are you doing?"

Eric King: What about actual pen pals?

Sara Falconer: Oh, I don't know. I think even for some of these projects that I've worked on, whether Prison Radio, which I worked on for a while in Montreal, or *4strugglemag*, which is a zine that I worked on, or the calendar or various other projects in between, at any given time I would be probably working pretty closely with 6 or 10 different people, with a few who I was closer with. So, I don't know. It comes and goes. Josh, how is it for you? Like, Josh is a workhorse among us.

Eric King: Josh is actively writes 28 people right now.

Sara Falconer: Oh my gosh.

Josh Davidson: No. I don't know.

Eric King: He has a list of who he writes. Tell me I'm wrong. [*Laughter all around.*]

Josh Davidson: I don't know the list. That's kind of the fascinating thing about it is that, if you're lucky, people get out of prison, and it creates this whole new level of communicating and relationship-building that is really fascinating a lot of times and heartbreaking, too, when you see someone that hasn't seen technology in 40 years or something like that.

But also, being a part of the calendar, being a part of creating *Rattling the Cages*, has meant me writing to and communicating with a lot of different prisoners who I didn't communicate with before. And sometimes it leads to really long-lasting and impactful relationships and letters that are several pages long. Other times, it's just a paragraph or two every few months to check-in on someone, to let not only them know that you're thinking about them and that you're there if they need anything, but also

to let the guards know that there are people out there looking after them and keeping an eye on them.

But, yeah, it changes. There's no definitive number. Sometimes I'll get a letter back from someone I haven't written to in two or three years, and that's also fascinating.

Eric King: Something that really touched me in our friendship was when I was at Inglewood—this is after I'd been prosecuted, they were charging me—and I told you about someone named Thomas Smith, "Mad Dog," who was in ADX. And I asked you, "Will you say 'Hi' to him? Will you just send this dude respect?" And you did it. Even though he wasn't a political prisoner, you still reached out to this complete stranger just to send solidarity. That really meant a lot to me. Do you write other "social prisoners"? Was that a one-off?

Josh Davidson: Yeah, for sure. I mean, the last panel we did with Bori and Farhan, those were two people that I met through the calendar who were not necessarily, you know, labeled political prisoners, but they did decades behind bars facing state repression. And there are others like that. There's political prisoners I write to who have made lifelong friendships with people inside, like you and "Smiles."

Eric King: Yeah!

Josh Davidson: There's a lot of stuff like that where I've written to people who knew people inside, friends of friends like that, or also just people I know that went to prison for non-political reasons. I'll admit that I'm more likely to write to someone who's in for a political act or political cause of some sort. And maybe that's selfish, because I feel like I can learn from them or also help them process what they're going through. But, no, I don't restrict it one way or the other.

Eric King: Sara, have you ever developed relationships with "social prisoners"? Or because of your projects, was it mostly political?

Sara Falconer: When *4strugglemag* was happening, we...

Eric King: Will you say what *4strugglemag* is?

also a contributor to *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners.*

Mark Cook — a Black revolutionary member of the George Jackson Brigade. While imprisoned at the Washington state penitentiary in Walla Walla, Mark had founded a chapter of the Black Panther Party and collaborated on an underground prisoner-produced newsletter, The Bomb, which agitated for expanding prisoners' civil rights. With others Mark pushed for and won a (relatively) democratic self-governing body for prisoners, the Residents Governance Counsel, after one of the longest prisoner strikes in US history. After his release he began organizing CONvention, an annual conference of prison activists. He supported the Brigade out of a commitment to the legacy of George Jackson and the conviction that aboveground and underground work were equally important. Mark captured after the successful liberation of John Sherman from prison custody. The irony of Mark's case is that he was framed-- he was pulled in by police because he was on a watch list of Black radicals, released, but re-arrested after another prisoner informed on him. Throughout his two and a half decades of incarceration, Mark continued to strive for justice and equality for those behind bars and on the outside. Mark released in 2000 and remains as active an organizer now as ever.

John Brown Anti-Klan Committee — (JBAKC) — an anti-racist organization based in the US that protested against the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and other white supremacist organizations and published anti-racist literature. Members of the JBAKC were involved in a string of bombings of military, government, and corporate targets in the 1980s. The JBAKC viewed themselves as anti-imperialists and considered African Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans to be oppressed colonial peoples. The JBAKC was started in 1978 by a group of white anti-racist activists with ties to the Weather Underground. They named the organization after abolitionist John Brown, who advocated and engaged in violence as a means to end slavery in the US. According to founding member Lisa Roth, the event that triggered the formation of the group was the discovery that the KKK was actively organizing in New York State prisons. In 1980, the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee distributed a pamphlet entitled "Take a Stand Against the Klan", which outlined the group's "Principles of Unity": Fight White Supremacy in All Its Forms! Death to the Klan! Support the Struggle of the Black Nation for Self-Determination! Support the Struggle to Free the Land! Follow Black and Other Third World Leadership Support the Struggle of Third World People for Human Rights! Oppose White Supremacist Attacks!

Kersplebedeb — a publisher of radical books & pamphlets, and manufacturer of radical agit prop materials based in Montreal. It's also a pretty sprawling website, with pages on key political fronts ranging from Palestine to Transgender Liberation, to political prisoners' struggles in the United States.

two life sentences in federal prison. The struggle for Leonard's freedom finally won, and Leonard's life sentence was commuted to home confinement beginning on February 18, 2025. *For more information:* whoisleonardpeltier.info

George Jackson Brigade — a revolutionary anti-imperialist urban guerrilla group founded in early 1975 by a small group of unemployed working class communists. All of the people publicly associated with the Brigade––Ed Mead, rita bo brown, Mark Cook, Bruce Siedel, John Sherman, Janine Bertram, and Therese Coupez––had long histories of involvement in mass political struggle in the Pacific Northwest. It was the involvement in the struggles of women, prisoners, Third World people, gays, and young people that led them to a commitment of armed struggle. The main point of their unity was a determination to fight capitalism with the force of arms here and now. Among their actions were bombings against the Washington Department of Corrections in solidarity with the 1975 Walla Walla prison uprising, actions in support of working class strikes, bank expropriations, and prisoner liberation. Ed Mead and Bruce Siedel began their actions with the desire to make good on George Jackson's threat to his captors from Soledad prison: "The monster they've engendered in me will return to torment its maker, from the grave, the pit, the profoundest pit. Hurl me into the next existence, the descent into hell won't turn me. I'll crawl back to dog his trail forever."

Ed Mead — a revolutionary guerrilla of the George Jackson Brigade, jailhouse lawyer, prisoner organizer with Men Against Sexism, and founder of Prison Legal News. Ed grew up in rural Alaska and spent time in and out of youth imprisonment. While in federal prison in the 60s for a pharmacy burglary (guilty) and an escape attempt from jail (innocent), Ed seriously committed himself to jailhouse lawyering and also came across radical Marxist and anarchist literature which enabled him intelligently to choose sides. After his release Ed traveled to San Francisco to "join the revolution," hoping to connect to revolutionary groups, which he did, and returned to Seattle with new-found skills. Upon returning to Seattle, Ed consulted with his good friend Bruce Seidel, who was also doing prison work in Seattle. They resolved to enact their politics of confrontation under the name of the George Jackson Brigade. Ed was captured during an unsuccessful bank expropriation, convicted, and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences. Ed was sent to the Washington state penitentiary at Walla Walla, where he organized Men Against Sexism, which successfully fought against prison rape and sexism. Ed was a seasoned jailhouse lawyer and prodigious journalist inside, founding the Red Dragon in the 70s, The Abolitionist in the 80s, and Prison Legal News, which still exists and is the longest running prison newspaper in the US. Once released in 1993, Ed worked tirelessly with revolutionary organizations and prisoner support groups, and worked tirelessly to free his comrade Mark Cook. Ed published the zine *The Theory and Practice of Armed Struggle in the Northwest: A Historical Analysis*, and the book Lumpen: *The Autobiography of Ed Mead*. Along with Mark, Ed is

Sara Falconer: Oh, yes. 4strugglemag was a zine, online and in print, that we produced for, I think, 20 issues, collecting writings from political prisoners and from social prisoners on the issues of the day. And so it wasn't necessarily about... We had case updates. That was important. We had case updates, which was great, but we also had... We were talking about war. We were talking about feminism. We had a whole issue on hip hop, which was amazing, because older prisoners, including Mumia, wrote in and said, "You know what? I had sort of been disregarding hip hop, because I didn't think it was very conscious. And you have made some interesting points here." The younger prisoners who had been writing to the magazine were just overjoyed, and there was just such an opportunity to build some of those bridges to make that connection for people who maybe only heard from political prisoners but hadn't seen those other writings. The issues are still online if people are interested. That's 4strugglemag.org.

I think through that I built some really great relationships with people who were regular contributors or who just wrote something that I thought was amazing, and I would write back. But at a certain point, I was also getting maybe 50 or a 100 letters / submissions a month. That was a lot, and it was very, very hard to keep going. I had some really great people who worked on it over the years. It wasn't just me as an outside collective, but it was really hard to keep going because of the sheer volume. Once the word started getting out, people were so into it. That type of a project, I think, could work really well still. It's harder and harder to get information in and out, as Josh mentioned earlier though.

Eric King: I can say two things. One, I don't think there is a *Rattling the Cages* without *4strugglemag*. I got three issues mailed into me, and it just blew me the fuck away. One of the saddest things that happened when I was getting transferred, the guards just threw them away. One of them ripped one of them in half. That was during a search. And it was like, these things felt like priceless relics, like time capsules of history. And to see them get destroyed by these pig sons of bitches, it hurt. It hurt bad.

Sara Falconer: I've got some back issues that I can probably send in your direction.

But the other thing I loved about that was, you know, yes, they got censored. Yes, they got destroyed. That happened all the time. I would get

dozens sent back to me. But in the midst of that, it was also getting distributed amongst prisoners who would share it with each other. And so we would get letters from people who not only were they not on the mailing list, the institution they were at was never on our mailing list. And so they would bring it with them when they moved, or however they're getting stuff around. Tremendously resourceful. It really blew my mind, the way that the people were able to share that with each other. I couldn't even estimate how many times each copy got read. So, I think that was very powerful.

Eric King: I'd say mine... Because I would pass them around! People want to read that shit. Not that shit. People wanna read that sort of stuff. They're very invested. Yeah, those things were blessings.

Let's talk about Certain Days. Certain Days has been around approximately 25 years. That's what my notes say.

Sara Falconer: This is the 25th edition. Yep.

Eric King: Let's start with you, Sara. Tell me about how you got started and why you got started. And then, Josh, I would like to hear from you. The same stuff, how and why.

Sara Falconer: Yeah!

Eric King: Can you tell them a brief overview of what Certain Days is also?

Sara Falconer: Josh, I'm going to leave the overview with you, because you are so good at it, and then I can talk about how I got started in Montreal on it.

Josh Davidson: The Certain Days Calendar, Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar was started in 2001. It was the idea of former political prisoners Herman Bell, Seth Hayes, and David Gilbert, who were all involved in...

Eric King: Seth was in the opening stages?

Josh Davidson: Yeah. Yeah, those three.

4strugglemag — a revolutionary magazine that focused on the insights and experiences of US political prisoners on major issues of the day. 4strugglemag is an independent non-sectarian revolutionary voice. They are unapologetically anti-imperialist and solidly in support of progressive National Liberation, especially the struggles of New African/Black, Mexicano/ Chicano, Puerto Rican and Native American Nations presently controlled by US imperialism. Reflecting the work and principles of political prisoners held by the United States, 4strugglemag advocates for Justice, Equality, Freedom, Socialism, Protection of our Mother Earth, Human Rights and Peace. The 4strugglemag archive is available: 4strugglemag.org

Mumia Abu-Jamal — an award winning journalist and was one of the founders of the Black Panther Party chapter in Philadelphia, PA. He has struggled for justice and human rights for people of color since he was at least 14 years old, the age when he joined the Party. In December of 1982, Mumia, who moonlighted by driving a taxi, happened upon police who were beating his brother. During the melee, a police officer was shot and killed. Despite the fact that many people saw someone else shoot and runaway from the scene, Mumia, in what could only be called a kangaroo court, was convicted and sentenced to death. During the summer of 1995, a death warrant was signed by Governor Tom Ridge, which sparked one of the most effective organizing efforts in defense of a political prisoner ever. Since that time, Mumia has had his death sentence overturned, but is still expected to serve the rest of his life in prison. *For more information:* freemumia.com

Leonard Peltier — a Native American political prisoner serving two consecutive life sentences for a crime he was set up for––the killing of two FBI agents. In the early 70s, Native Americans on the Pine Ridge Reservation were assaulted and murdered by a group of vigilantes and looked towards the American Indian Movement (AIM) for help. Hundreds of AIM members occupied the village of Wounded Knee in Pine Ridge in 1973, demanding an end to the US-backed murder and intimidation of AIM supporters on the reservation and that the treaties signed by the US be honored that gave the Lakota people the right to self-rule the land surrounding the Black Hills. Federal authorities surrounded the occupation with an army of over 300. The Indians refused to back down. They used weapons to defend themselves and held off the government forces for 73 days. After the siege, Leonard came to Pine Ridge with a few other AIM members in 1975 and set up camp in the village of Oglala to protect the village from vigilantes. On July 26, 1975 two FBI agents drove into the property unannounced and unidentified, and a firefight erupted, leaving the two FBI agents and one AIM member dead, while scores of FBI agents and US Marshals surrounded the property. It's believed that the attack against the AIM activists was an attempt to create a diversion for a secret agreement to transfer parts of the Pine Ridge Reservation to the federal government. With fabricated evidence and preventing Leonard from claiming self-defense, Leonard was convicted to

Indigenous name is Oso Blanco, or Yona Unega in Cherokee. He was known to the FBI as 'Robin the Hood' because he informed the bank tellers he was expropriating funds to assist the Zapatistas fighting for independence in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. Oso Blanco continues his assistance to Zapatistas and native kids from within prison through the Children's Art Project (CAP). Check out the artwork he created to raise funds for native kids, for sale online as greeting cards and posters, on his new website at freeosoblanco.org. Please support the 'Zapatista supply warrior' in his mission and share the link within your networks!

Zapatista Army of National Liberation — Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) — a revolutionary and autonomous Indigenous liberation movement in Chiapas, Mexico. The Zapatistas takes its name from Emiliano Zapata, the peasant revolutionary, land reformer, and commander of the Liberation Army of the South during the Mexican Revolution, and sees itself as his ideological heir. EZLN's ideology has been characterized as libertarian socialist, anarchist, or Marxist, and having roots in liberation theology, although the Zapatistas have rejected political classification in their poetic and mythical self-understanding. The EZLN aligns itself with the wider alter-globalization, anti-neoliberal social movement, seeking indigenous control over local resources, especially land. The Zapatistas describe themselves as a decentralized organization. The pseudonymous Subcomandante Marcos is widely considered its leader despite his claims that the group has no single leader. Political decisions are deliberated and decided in community assemblies. Military and organizational matters are decided by the Zapatista area elders who compose the General Command (Revolutionary Indigenous Clandestine Committee – General Command, or CCRI-CG).

Daniel McGowan — a member of the Certain Days collective, and former political prisoner from Queens, NY. He works with NYC Books Through Bars and the Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF). At the end of 2005, the FBI opened a new phase of its assault on earth and animal liberation movements—known as the Green Scare—with the arrests and indictments of a large number of activists. This offensive, dubbed Operation Backfire, was intended to obtain convictions for many of the unsolved Earth Liberation Front (ELF) arsons of the preceding ten years—but more so, to have a chilling effect on all ecological direct action. Of those charged in Operation Backfire, nine ultimately cooperated with the government and informed on others in hopes of reduced sentences. Four held out through a terrifying year, during which it seemed certain they would end up serving decades in prison, until they were able to broker plea deals in which they could claim responsibility for their actions without providing information about others, including Daniel. A "terrorism label was applied to Daniel's sentence, and he was ultimately sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment. He released on probation in June 2013.

Sara Falconer: All three of them.

Josh Davidson: Yeah. They were all involved in the Black liberation struggle, imprisoned in New York state, and they, along with organizers and friends on the outside—mainly in Montreal and also in, I think, upstate New York—worked to put this calendar out. It's really amazing. There's 25 of them out now. It started as an educational project, and as a fundraiser to teach people about political prisoners and about our movements and the people that struggle for them, and also as a way to raise money for those people who are suffering inside. Over the years, I think it's gone from raising a few hundred each year to several tens of thousands of dollars every year that we're able to distribute to a wide variety of different causes, people on the front lines, people fighting to get out of prison, you name it. Each calendar has 12 pieces of art and 12 essays usually by prisoners or their supporters on the outside. Instead of dates you'd find in a regular calendar, this calendar is full of radical movement dates, so that you're reminded every day of the year of what people have gone through and how the struggle continues every day.

Eric King: Quick question. You said it was started by David, Herman, and Seth—RIP Seth. How did they coordinate together to have this idea? Or were they in the same prison? How did those three together formulate this idea?

Sara Falconer: Well, I can talk a little bit about that, and I will try and be as accurate as I can. I moved to Montreal in 2001, which was an amazing time to be an anarchist in Montreal. There were so many great groups, so much awesome organizing, just this energy, and the PIRG, the QPIRG [*Quebec public interest research group*] that we organized out of, was just like a real place that you could meet people that were working on cool projects. And I met the people who had been working on the calendar before I moved there. Just a totally awesome collective of people who had been visiting Herman, David, and Seth and others in upstate New York, because Montreal is a reasonable driving distance to some of those prisons.

I think it was Herman's idea originally, if I remember correctly. Then they facilitated some of this planning on the outside so that everybody could contribute their ideas to it, and to make sure that they were soliciting articles from a really wide variety of political prisoners and artists on the inside and outside and that sort of thing. And it just built from there. They

had, as three individuals, such amazing respect, as leaders and educators and writers and voices in the political prisoner movement, had made such wonderful connections with people in Montreal, in New York, and elsewhere that they had a really great foundation to start up from. So, I wanted to be part of it.

I started just distributing. I was just like, "This thing is amazing," and I would hustle getting it out to bookstores or dropping off mail or whatever it was. Then it wasn't long before I weaseled into the collective. I am fuzzy on the origin story. Sometimes people ask me what the name Certain Days is from and I'm like, "I don't even have a really clear backstory for that."

I do have a good sense that it's about certain days being important, certain days coming, you know, the future that we are building together. There's multiple layers to it, but I think probably Herman would have a better way of describing it. It's just a tremendously important project. I love seeing it every single day. I like having prisoners' visions and voices in our day to day life, not just siloed off into a political prisoner support movement or whatever, but in our daily lives, in all of our organizing, in our planning, in our thoughts.

Eric King: And I think the calendar does such an amazing job of that. Even just to make zines or whatever, like, this stuff's not free. And I imagine to create a calendar, that's a lot of work. How did the early issues get financed? How did that come to fruition to get those not only created, but then mailed everywhere?

Josh Davidson: Expropriations. [*Laughter all around.*]

Sara Falconer: I briefly mentioned the PIRGs, but you may have similar models in the states. Public interest research groups, PIRGs—it was the QPIRG because it was the Quebec PIRG—are mostly based out of universities, and they are a wonderful resource to activists, especially students. There was a space there to do some of the planning, to do the actual physical work and meetings and things like that, and they were tremendously supportive.

We were a working group of the QPIRG for a number of years until we transitioned to our own project. Some of us were students, some weren't. I was a student at the time. So, that was where it started. And then

prisoners did in fact exist in the United States. In 1997 Jalil initiated the Jericho Movement. Over 6,000 supporters gathered in the Jericho '98 march in Washington DC and the Bay Area to demand amnesty for US political prisoners on the basis of international law. The Jericho Amnesty Movement aims to gain the recognition by the US government and the United Nations that political prisoners exist in this country, and that on the basis of international law, they should be granted amnesty because of the political nature of their cases.

Sekou Odinga — Sekou was forced into hiding in 1969 when he and twenty other Black Panther Party members were wrongly charged with criminal conspiracy in the NY Panther 21 case. Several months later, while still underground, he traveled to Algeria to establish an international chapter of the Black Panther Party. Later, Sekou became an activist in the New Afrikan Independence Movement and a member of the Black Liberation Army. On October 23, 1981, Sekou and Mtyari Shabaka Sundiata were ambushed by the NYC police and FBI agents. The police murdered Mtyari. Sekou was eventually captured, tortured, and eventually charged with the liberation of Assata Shakur and the expropriation of money from an armored car. Sekou was convicted of two federal charges under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) Act and was sentence to 40 years imprisonment and a $50,000 fine. He was also convicted of six state counts of attempted murder stemming from the defense of himself and Mtyari during the police attack in 1981. For this he was sentenced to concurrent life sentences. Sekou released from prison on November 25, 2014 and passed away on January 12, 2024, at the age of 79.

Marilyn Buck — an anti-imperialist revolutionary who was imprisoned for her participation in the 1979 prison escape of Assata Shakur, the 1981 Brinks robbery, and the 1983 US Senate bombing. Marilyn joined Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) during the height of activism against the Vietnam war while at the University of Texas. In 1967 she moved to Chicago where she edited the SDS newsletter New Left Notes, and incorporated Marxist feminism into the organization's politics. In San Francisco, she worked with Third World Newsreel, a media collective that showcased anti-imperialist and anti- colonialist struggles around the world. Convicted for purchasing ammunition for the Black Liberation Army in 1973, she was sentenced to 10 years in prison, furloughed in 1977, and went underground instead of returning to prison. After her capture and convictions in 1985, she was sentenced to 80 years in federal prison, where she wrote on women in prison, solitary confinement, political prisoner support, and revolutionary poetry. Marilyn passed away on August 3, 2010.

Oso Blanco — an indigenous activist originally serving 80 years in prison for a series of bank expropriations throughout the southwest in 1998-1999 he undertook to help fund the Zapatistas. In 2016, 25 years were taken off his sentence when he won his Johnson v. U.S. appeal making him eligible for release in 2048. He is part of the wolf clan Cherokee/Choctaw, raised in New Mexico. His

involvement with the Black Panther Party and his knowledge as to the whereabouts of Assata Shakur and not his conduct while imprisoned. While in prison, Seth worked as a librarian, pre-release advisor, and AIDS counselor, mentoring younger prisoners and continuing to struggle for his people. Seth was a founding member of the Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners calendar collective. Seth passed away at the age of 72 on December 24, 2019.

Burning Books — a radical bookstore in Buffalo, NY that opened in September of 2009 on the anniversary of the Attica prison uprising. Burning Books focuses exclusively on social justice issues and works to support individuals and movements that are struggling against oppression and domination in all its forms, and is a partner of—and the main distributor for—the Certain Days Freedom for Political Prisoners yearly calendar. *For more information:* https://burningbooks.com/

Herman Bell — a former member of both the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army, and he was imprisoned for 45 years. Herman was captured in New Orleans in 1973, and eventually he, Jalil Muntaqim, and Albert Nuh Washington were convicted of attacks on police. Herman was also implicated in the San Francisco 8 case and pleaded guilty to a lesser offense. He spent five years imprisoned in the federal system, in the Marion control unit for two of those years, before spending decades in various New York State maximum security prisons. While imprisoned he was committed to community work, and he is a founding member of the Victory Gardens Project and the Certain Days Collective. He released in 2018, after his eighth parole hearing.

Jalil Muntaqim — Jalil was 19 years old when he was arrested. He is a former member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army, and was one of the longest held political prisoners in the world. Jalil was born October 18, 1951, in Oakland, CA. His early years were spent in San Francisco. Jalil participated in NAACP youth organizing during the civil rights movement. In high school, he became a leading member of the Black Student Union, often touring in "speak-outs." After the assassination of Dr. King, Jalil began to believe a more militant response to racism and injustice was necessary. He began to look towards the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense for leadership and was recruited into the BPP by school friends who had since become Panthers. Two months shy of his 20th birthday, Jalil was captured along with Albert "Nuh" Washington in a midnight shoot-out with San Francisco police. While in San Quentin prison in California in 1976, Jalil launched the National Prisoners Campaign to Petition the United Nations to recognize the existence of political prisoners in the United States. Progressives nationwide joined this effort, and the petition was submitted in Geneva, Switzerland. This led to Lennox Hinds and the National Conference of Black Lawyers having the UN International Commission of Jurists tour US prisons and speak with specific political prisoners. The International Commission of Jurists then reported that political

eventually, through much trial and error and not being very good at numbers or accounting, it slowly started to make more sense out of it.

And then certainly, the current collective does such an amazing job of making it something that is feasible. The folks at Burning Books have done an awesome job of doing some of those tasks in the mail. We used to be sending mail from Canada into the states. You can imagine how expensive and time consuming that was. That's been just a wonderful partnership. But, at the time, it makes sense because we were sending like, I don't know, 100s of calendars, maybe a couple thousand, and now it's a lot more.

Eric King: One of the fun things I like doing with the calendar is I'll ask a prisoner their birthday and then we'll just flip through and on this day, prisoners killed 17 people at wherever. How and why did those first dates get decided? Or how do dates get added to it? What events qualify to be in the calendar?

Sara Falconer: I credit the early collective with so much of the starting work on that. They must have had to do so much research to start those dates. They probably canvassed David, Herman, Seth, and other people that they were in touch with to make sure that important dates were included. But it was an organic process over the years. Sometimes people will write and say, "Hey, why isn't this date in there?" And, really, it's not intentional, it's just that we had to be reminded of it, or maybe we didn't know about a certain date or whatever. Some things change over time, too, in terms of the significance. Certain dates that you would put in for the last 5 years, they won't necessarily stay in for the next 15 years because, for one thing, there's only so much space in those little boxes. So, it's a process that is constantly evolving. I don't know, Josh, how the current decision-making works around it, but it's, to me, very fluid and definitely a crowd-sourced kind of thing over the years. Including the dates that we got wrong by mistake over the years.

Eric King: Real quick, I looked up to see if there was anything going on today. It's a very slow week in radical history.

Sara Falconer: It's like everything else. It's like that weird dead area right after January. Who's going to do anything other than, like, January 1st, which is for the revolution.

Eric King: On Thursday, that was the anniversary of a San Quentin prison strike.

Josh Davidson: The dates do change, and it is very fluid. Sometimes we'll get an email from someone saying, "Such and such got out this day," or sometimes, "This date is wrong." We just noticed this week that we have a Leonard Peltier date that's, I think, in June and July, and it's supposed to just be in July. There are mistakes. Kudos to people who find them and point them out.

While making *Rattling the Cages*, I interviewed Ed Mead and Mark Cook together, both of the George Jackson Brigade. Rest in peace to Ed. Ed told me that he provided the original Certain Days collective with the dates that went in the calendar.

Sara Falconer: Oh, that's so cool. I didn't even know that.

Josh Davidson: I have no idea if that's true.

Eric King: I hope it's not true. I would love that about Ed if he just bullshitted that.

Josh Davidson: It could be. Yeah, I have no idea. Then recently I came across a 1982 calendar, which is kind of cool, that the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee made. I don't know if that's really a precursor to the Certain Days calendar, but it's pretty amazing how they...

Eric King: One of my proudest moments when I was first locked up was the first time I saw one of my writings in Certain Days. And then one of my saddest moments was the next year when I got rejected. How does the submission process work? How does something get in but something else has to sit in the corner? What's that process like?

Sara Falconer: Well, there's a call for submissions that goes out as early in the year as possible to try and reach particularly prisoners, because it's going to take them longer to get the information back to the collective. From there—and I keep saying, "We," but I actually have stepped down into a supporting role, but I think I know a little bit about the process from over the years. So, we would put all of the art and articles into a database where we can review them together, and once the deadline has

components for US cruise missiles—the explosion played a part in Litton losing the contract. Ann was handed a life sentence but was released from Canada's infamous Prison for Women (P4W) after nearly eight years. She spent over thirty years in prison and on parole and has returned to prison twice for parole violations. Now on the outside, Ann tirelessly continues her abolitionist efforts and continues to inspire younger generations. She has published two books, *Direct Action: Memoirs of an Urban Guerrilla* (2002) and *Taking the Rap: Women Doing Time for Society's Crimes* (2018).

Barton Prisoner Solidarity Project — a prison abolitionist project started to develop connections between anarchists on the outside and prisoners inside the Barton Jail in Hamilton, Ontario. To that end, the group maintains a phone line and PO box to facilitate contact and does social media/press work and organizes rallies and other events. The project has helped out with hunger strikes, pressuring prisoner administrators, and more. *For more information*: archive.org/details/practical-abolition/mode/2up

Xinachtli — (Alvaro Luna Hernandez) a lawyer and community organizer from Texas. Xinachtli was recognized nationally and internationally as the national coordinator of the Ricardo Aldape Guerra Defense Committee, which led the struggle to free Mexican national Aldape Guerra from Texas's death row after being framed by Houston police for allegedly killing a cop. Xinachtli's human rights work has been recognized in Italy, France, Spain, Switzerland, Mexico, and other countries. In 1976, Xinachtli was wrongfully convicted, and he was paroled in 1991. Subsequently, in 1997, he was sentenced to fifty years in prison for defending himself by disarming a police officer who drew a weapon on him. The trial evidence clearly showed Xinachtli was the victim of witch hunts and a police- orchestrated conspiracy to frame or eliminate him. While imprisoned, Xinachtli has helped countless people with his jailhouse lawyering, and he is also an inside member of the Certain Days Collective, which produces a yearly calendar to raise funds and awareness about political prisoners. In total, Xinachtli has served over 40 years in numerous Texas state prisons, usually in solitary confinement, where he continues to fight back against his imprisonment.

Robert Seth Hayes — after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the social upheaval which followed it, Robert Seth Hayes joined the Black Panther Party, working in the Party's free medical clinics and free breakfast programs. Like many other activists, Seth was forced underground by FBI and police repression of the Panther movement. Once underground, Seth joined the Black Liberation Army. In 1973, following a shootout with police, Seth was arrested and convicted of the murder of a New York City police officer, and, while maintaining his innocence, sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. Imprisoned for nearly 40 years, Seth has long since served his sentence. Seth first came up for parole in 1998, but prison officials refused to release him, focusing on his

People, Places, Events, & Organizations

Red Emma's — a radical bookstore and worker cooperative dedicated to putting principles of solidarity and sustainability into practice in a democratic workplace. *For more information:* redemmas.org

David Gilbert — a lifelong anti-imperialist who was captured and imprisoned as a result of an attempted expropriation of a Brinks truck in Nyack, New York, in 1981. He was sentenced to 75 years to life but his sentence was commuted by outgoing Governor Cuomo, and he was released from prison after nearly 40 years in November 2021. Though he spent short stints at MCC-NY and other federal prisons and jails, David spent the majority of his forty-year incarceration at the six maximum security men's prisons in New York (Attica, Auburn, Clinton, Comstock, Wende, and Shawangunk prisons). While in prison, David was a cofounder of the Certain Days Collective, and he also helped pioneer AIDS awareness programs that saved thousands of lives in prisons across the country. David wrote numerous zines, including *Our Commitment Is to Our Communities: Mass Incarceration, Political Prisoners and Building a Movement for Community-Based Justice* (2014). He also wrote three books — *No Surrender: Writings from an Anti-Imperialist Political Prisoner* (2004); *Love and Struggle: My Life in SDS, the Weather Underground, and Beyond* (2012); and *Looking at the U.S. White Working Class Historically* (2017).

Maximumrocknroll — a punk zine based in San Francisco, and a de facto bible of the punk scene, started as a radio show in 1977 and as a print zine in 1982 that ran until 2019. MRR often published writings by political prisoners and updates from radical movements. Much of their past issues have been archived and scanned: archive.org/details/maximumrnr

Anarchist Black Cross — a political prisoner support group with a long and varied radical history tracing back to support for imprisoned Russian revolutionaries in the 1880s, to support for anarchist revolutionaries in the Spanish Civil War and the revolutionary conflagrations in Europe in the early to mid 1900s. In the late 60s, the ABC found a British contingent following Stuart Christie's release from Spanish prisons which supported the guerrilla underground in Europe. In the 70s, after anarchist Black Liberation Army prisoner of war Lorenzo K'omboa Ervin's proposal for an ABC network, US chapters formed to support captured revolutionaries, a project that continues to this day. *For more information:* https://www.abcf.net/

Ann Hansen — Ann Hansen stood trial as one of the Squamish Five, members of a radical Canadian anarchist group known as Direct Action who sabotaged government and corporate property in the 1980s. The group carried out militant actions which included an attack on a BC Hydro substation on Vancouver Island and the Litton Industries bombing in Toronto, which was preparing to build

passed, we would review all those. In the meantime, the collective solicits particular ones that they're like, "Hey, the topic is ___" The year that we were working on the Indigenous struggle, and we definitely had to reach out to Indigenous political prisoners, certain activists on both sides of the border that we wanted to make sure were included.

It's not just like everybody submits, and then we pick some just from that. Some of it is soliciting articles from organizations or from people that we really want to see represented too. It's quite a process. We used to do it in-person, which was so wonderful. We would just sit down and eat bagels and—don't make fun of the way I say bagels—we would just hang out for an entire weekend and look at all the art and articles and plan it out.

Over the years, because everybody is in all these different cities and different countries, it's more of a virtual process. But I miss those days, and it was so much fun. I think we try and recreate it, you know, the fun with each other, but it's different than just sitting in a room until we're sick of each other picking out things. I don't know, Josh, you've been in it more recently. How has the process changed or how do you find that it works with the different submissions?

Josh Davidson: I think, overall, the process has stayed like you said. We do get a lot of submissions from people in prison, but I feel like in the last few years we've gotten less. I don't know if that's a matter of state repression, or what.

Eric King: You said you get less submissions?

Josh Davidson: Yes, I feel like we've gotten less submissions from people in prison and I don't really know the reason behind that.

Eric King: Fire Ant has also suffered that fate, oddly.

Josh Davidson: Yeah. And it could just be guards not sharing the call out for submissions. It could be people sending us stuff and us not getting it. I'm not really sure. It has sometimes required us reaching out to either people's support networks or organizations on the outside to get particular articles or artwork on a particular subject. But no, I don't think it's changed that much over the years. Sometimes we'll see really amazing artwork at book fairs or events we're at, and we'll ask that artist to submit

their stuff to the calendar, which has led to a lot of really great inclusions.

Eric King: Alright, sweet. I want to segue now to something ...

Sara Falconer: Just before we move away from calendar, I want to remind everybody that it's actually almost sold out. I have a very small amount of copies in Hamilton here to do Canadian distro. Burning Books is sending out a whole bunch. Kersplebedeb in Montreal does distro in Canada, too. But everybody is running very low on copies. Get some. Don't be a square. Certaindays.org, if you want some. It's just awesome to see everybody's support of it, that it's doing that well this year for sure.

Eric King: I really loved it when I would write Josh, and I'd be like, "So and so needs a calendar." Just some random-ass dude. And like three days later or a week later, 20 days, whatever, the calendar would show up. So not only would that prisoner get something great, but then I'd look like a hotshot for asking for it. I used to love those moments.

Sara Falconer: That's the other thing, too. People can support it. If you already have your calendar, maybe you already bought 20, that's awesome. You can buy copies for prisoners for a discounted rate if you go to the website, too. If you have a prisoner that you correspond with, you can suggest their name and they'll receive a calendar. Or just say, "I would like to send five calendars to prisoners," and you can, and we'll pick people that are in need. People write to us all the time.

Eric King: It's interesting that you said prisoners get a discount because Josh used to charge me double. And even more to get my submissions approved! [*Laughter.*]

I'm going to segue to *Rattling the Cages*. About five or six years ago, me and Josh were writing, and we had this idea to bring together the history of the lives of prisoners, as opposed to the politics of prisoners. And that felt really instrumental to me, because we were losing people like Tom Manning, and I would never know what they actually felt, what they experienced, what their joys or happinesses or sadnesses were like. And that hurt me, because I wanted to honor them as individual people along with being revolutionaries. So, I've got a question for you, Sara. I'm going to start with Josh. Why did you say yes to this project? Why did you say "I'm willing to put in this goddamn work and find a way to develop this"?

Josh Davidson: Yeah, not yet. I will.

Eric King: I end all these by deeply encouraging people to please write prisoners, to start doing so. Please get involved. To all the groups that are still doing that, I usually talk to you guys on Instagram, but every single group repping prisoners, thank you. You're all doing real great. Shout out to Pushing Down the Walls, too. Those dudes out there are really amazing. Please write Randy Platt, Smiles. He is at ADX, the federal supermax. He is there for slicing a cop. He saved my life literally on at least two occasions and had my back countless other times. He did that, putting his life on the line, going against the Nazis in there and putting a a queer loving antifascist first, and that's a dangerous game inside prison. Please write Randy Platt, aka Smiles, at ADX. And, Libertie, you can go ahead and shut us down. Thank you, everyone.

Libertie Valance: Thank you all so much. This has been a really good conversation. Also, congratulations on the 10th event in the series! You've done an incredible job putting these together. And for anyone who hasn't tuned in for all 10 of them, definitely, check out the zines or the youtube archive because they've all been incredible. So many gems. I hope you all have a great evening. Bye, take care.

conditions. They're trying to organize the community, and they work very closely with the families around this stuff too. So, shout out to all the awesome work that's happening in Canada, and Prison Radio in Montreal and Kingston and all the cool places. Vancouver, I think, still has one, too, just raising the voices. So yeah, thank you, Prison Radio.

Eric King: Josh, shout out some projects, some support things, anything you want to talk about or just let people know about?

Josh Davidson: Besides getting a Certain Days calendar since it's the beginning of the new year, check out *Rattling the Cages*, check out these rad Oso Blanco greeting cards. Also, we've been turning these *Rattling the Cages* panel talks with Firestorm Books—this is our 10th one—we've been turning them into zines. I'm sharing a link now.[1] People can download them, print them, send them into people in prison who don't have the opportunity to listen to these.

Eric King: Shout out to Ev!

Josh Davidson: Yep. And shout out to ABC groups that are doing this amazing work, whether it's noise demos or Running Down the Walls, raising awareness and funds for people inside. And I'll just shout out a few political prisoners who have been in for a long time who could use some love. Kamau Sadiki is one. We had his daughter on the first panel talk. An amazing family. Also, Jalil Al-Amin, formerly H. Rap Brown, who's imprisoned in the federal system, and he's not getting the medical attention he needs. Then also the Virgin Island 3. There's still 3 guys from the Virgin Islands who have been in prison since, I believe, 1973. They're in their upper 70s, some, I think, in their 80s now. Two of them participated in Rattling the Cages, and in doing so, I told them, it was kind of a quid pro quo thing, where they wanted their memoirs and poems produced. So I'll be working on that. If anyone wants to help, reach out to the Virgin Island 3 and help share their stories.

Eric King: Anyone wants a book done, just hit up, Josh right away!

Sara Falconer: Josh didn't learn that lesson about capacity and saying no yet.

[1] *archive.org/details/@rattling_the_cages_zines*

Josh Davidson: Great question.

Eric King: Besides the glory and money.

Josh Davidson: Yes, obviously the glory and money.

Eric King: We only get half a cent each per book, though.

Josh Davidson: No, it's just that it was so compelling. It began with Eric and I reading a book. Again, a lot of good things in my life happened from just reading a book. And this one happened to be *Say Nothing*, which is about the IRA and the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and particularly the Boston History Project, which was this campaign to record oral histories of people involved in the struggle in Northern Ireland. That's where we got the idea to...

Eric King: The North of Ireland.

Josh Davidson: The North of Ireland, correct. Yes. And that's where we got the idea. Originally, we were thinking of creating a few zines of interviews with political prisoners from the Black liberation struggle, particularly, Sekou Odinga, Mutulu Shakur, and Maroon, Russell Maroon Shoatz. Like so many people, those are people that have passed away since we came up with this idea. But, being in the Certain Days calendar collective, being someone who writes to a lot of people in prison, I did have access to a lot of people who wanted to share their stories, and it kind of mushroomed from there.

It was a handful of people that wanted to talk, and then they told their friends or comrades, and then they wanted to talk. And, eventually, we got 40 people to share their oral histories of life inside and how they maintain the struggle.

Eric King: Did you face any resistance at first? Were people like, "No, fuck this," and then later turned around?

Josh Davidson: No, there were a lot of people that didn't want to be involved. Not as many as those who did, but, yeah, there were a lot of people that didn't want to tell their story, or were in the process of writing their memoirs maybe and didn't want to tell the same story twice.

And then there's a handful of people who have seen the product of what came out of that and wish that they had been involved. But, luckily, we've been able to include some of those people with these talks that we've been doing, which is just a way of continuing to raise the voices and amplify the struggles of people inside.

Eric King: Who was the first person to say yes?

Josh Davidson: You!

Eric King: Oh, yeah.

Josh Davidson: No, that's a good question. Actually, for the most part, the order of people in the book is the order in which I got the responses back. Donna Willmott was probably one of the first people. But, there were a whole bunch of people that were really interested in it. For me, I love being able to share this history and learn this history with people who don't know about it, but also just knowing that people who do, people who have been involved in this for decades and decades, can read this book and still learn something, is really moving for me.

Eric King: You said Donna was one of the first. For me, Donna's one of the people I love most on Earth, and I hope we're going to have them on a panel soon. So, Sara, me and you, we didn't really talk much. I think there was mutual respect. I knew about you from people I had lived with, from knowing your work with Certain Days, and then also reading your intro to the RAF book.

I'd like to first start with, one, how did you get the intro to the RAF book? And then, two, what did you think when Josh brought this project to you? Because you were the only person I requested by name. Like, lock in Sara if we can get her. How did that feel, and what were your thoughts about the project, starting with the RAF book and then the second question?

Sara Falconer: I mean, what an honor to be invited to have some words in these super important and beautiful books. For the RAF one, one of the main people that was working on it was Karl from Kersplebedeb that I mentioned previously in Montreal, a wonderful publisher of totally amazing radical books, zines, and more. Speaking of moving to Montreal and finding all of these wonderful resources, that was definitely a big

that we're out here for them, because it keeps our movement strong and because we get so much from that relationship together. They're not forgotten, and we are building these connections no matter what barriers are in front of us. And that makes us feel safer as activists too, I think. It makes us feel more connected. And, again, we learn from each other so much. I get so much out of these relationships.

But I think you feeling supported and protected makes us feel supported and protected in the work that we're doing, too. It's a scary space to be in and to be like, we're going stand up and do this.

Eric King: Sometimes I think that people who don't participate in abolitionist work don't understand that it's not a one-sided thing. It's not. Like you both said, this isn't goddamn charity work. Your lives are getting enriched also. These are relationships, and they're beneficial in a thousand ways even though they're behind bars.

We're going to close out here soon. I wanted to give each of you a chance to talk about projects you're doing now or projects you've done in the past that you just want to emphasize or just talk about the role that it had or the impact it had on your lives. So, Sara, we'll start with you. If there's anything you want to shout out or give a history rep to, now would be just a really great time.

Sara Falconer: Locally here in Canada, there's actually an expansion of prisons, very much American style, like prison expansion projects that are underway. It's a wonderful group that's starting to do so, well has been for a while now, doing some great organizing work to try and contest that, to try and find ways to let people know that it's happening in their communities, how damaging it's going to be, and just trying to find ways to make it not happen. There is a wonderful local group called BAPSOP. I mentioned them before, Barton Prison Solidarity Project. You can find them on Instagram, or if you can't, just find me on Instagram, and I'll point you in the direction of these great projects. They are just the most badass organizers. They stand outside the prison with their phone number on a huge banner and wait for people to call them. And that is so powerful because the access to the prisoners, even though they're in the middle of our community, is very limited. This is a brutal condition jail, like they don't turn the heat on until way far into the winter. They ran out of toilet paper for a significant amount of weeks this last year. Just brutal

they need support. So finding that, whatever it may be, whether it's printing something, etc... Danielle and I have become so close with people inside who needed help with degrees that they were working on. Think about working on a degree inside and not having access to the internet.

Eric King: I can think of that, and it's horrible.

Josh Davidson: Yeah, it is horrible. So, we're able to help print stuff out and help people with getting degrees, with educating themselves, with bettering themselves. Whatever we can do in that capacity, I think, is worthwhile.

Eric King: I would like to point out that I've been lifted up by so many people. An example of what we're talking about. I've got a comrade named Marissa, and they were the third person ever to write me 10 years ago, or 11 year, whenever. And when I got out, they introduced me to their friends at Broken Record Radio Hour where I could go on this radio show and just have an hour to talk about prison. Now I've developed a relationship with those people, and it all happened because Marissa cared enough. I was able to go talk in Seattle, Washington because our homie Lawson cared enough to have us out there, me and Josh. There have been these things where if you care enough and you have the ability—because not everyone has the ability—but if you have the ability and you can help someone or develop these outside supports, it is, I could cry talking about you two or even talking to you two because my life has been impacted by not only you but people like you. I've seen firsthand the immense, I don't want to say fucking impact again, I just said it, but impact you've had on people's lives. Twenty five years, four and a half weeks, it's a big deal. So I hope you two both know that what you do is not just support people, it's changed lives. It makes lives better. It keeps people alive. If I could give you both hugs right now I would.

Josh Davidson: I just wanted to say that I think it makes me a better person, writing to people inside and knowing them ...

Eric King: Well, because you started off a bad person. There's only one way to go. [*Laughter.*]

Sara Falconer: But he's right, he's right in so many ways. This is why we have to let people know that they're not forgotten when they go inside,

piece of it. And I had been involved in ABC for many years and was just interested in this work and doing lots of reading and thinking and talking about it. They reached out and asked if I wanted to write the introduction, and I was, again, just completely, completely proud to be asked to do it. Also, it's so much pressure. Not that the next book that I wrote the introduction for didn't have Angela Davis writing the preface. Like, no pressure at all there! It's like, please, don't tell me that.

I know she did such a beautiful job, too. But, yeah. When it comes to any kind of project like this, I'm just so pleased to be able to support it in some way. I do love writing. I have been a writer for many years, and to have that opportunity to reflect and try to share my ideas, to try and get people excited about the thing they're about to read, that's something that I actually really love doing. What an accomplishment, *Rattling the Cages*. You were talking a little bit about what a challenge it was to reach people, like we just talked about how hard it is with censorship and repression and time, and the details of all these things. It was in the middle of Covid, on top of everything else. And, well, the two of you and everybody that was supporting it did such an amazing job.

When I found out that I could help at all, I helped. I helped a little bit with some of the editing, which is also my nerdy superpower. I love doing that when I can. But to be invited to do that introduction was a real honor, and really exciting, because it let me step back and reflect not only on all the amazing things that I've had a sneak peek to. Reading the book, I was feeling so emotional and inspired by everything that I'd been reading, but also to think about my own development and how that oral history was such a big piece of it. So, Josh and I have worked together on Certain Days for a long time, and he's such a dear friend. It was fun to be able to support him on this other big project that was such a passion of his for so long too.

Josh Davidson: I just want to add to that part of what made this project so special for me was that we could include so many different people in it. Not just Sara writing such a beautiful introduction, but Amy Schwartz with the Certain Days calendar and Pat Corekin at the Zinn Education Project helped me do the editing of the book and thinking through some of those things. I respect to them, too, and they did so much work on it.

I had Leslie James Pickering at Burning Books and David Gilbert helping me with the glossary at the back. And there are so many people that were

involved, sometimes in really minute ways, but sometimes in really powerful and important ways. I think doing that, working with people both outside and inside, really made the project all the more special for me.

Eric King: Considering how much the publishers decided not to help you, I am so happy that the community decided to with that extra hand. Sara, when you first heard about it, did you think it was going to come off? Did you think, "Oh, this is a great idea?" Did you think this has already been done? What did you think about the project itself?

Sara Falconer: Well, for one thing, I knew Josh was going to get it done, because he just gets it done. You mentioned Tom Manning, and we've lost so many important people in our movements over the years, like Marilyn Buck, Seth Hayes, Sekou Kambui, so many people that I had been very close with. I was very close with Sekou Kambui before he passed, and that's another person who I was lucky to talk to after he was released. But to think that they have so much to give us in terms of sharing their stories, in terms of telling us about themselves as people, which was a really interesting dimension of this book, that's just such a gift. These oral histories are going to shape generations to come. You know, Ray Levasseur and Tom Manning had worked on *Hauling Up the Morning*, another really beautiful book. I don't remember the year of that. It just has absolutely transformative writings in it to read, and to learn about all of the different people that are still very much a part of our movements and our history. I knew that the idea of an oral history was so powerful, and I knew that we were kind of overdue for one. We are unfortunately losing people due to age, due to medical neglect by the shit prison systems, and what a gift—what a gift—to be able to share this with people.

Eric King: So, when Josh talked about—for those listening—he talked about how we were reading *Say Nothing*, and the thing that affected me the most about that was that the book touched on the trauma. It didn't just focus on the glory of being a fighter. There are lasting impacts to this, and those lasting impacts don't get as much credit as the bravado. They don't get as much attention. And I was feeling so weak. I was feeling hurt and vulnerable, and I didn't see that my elders had felt that also. I only read about the power, and so I felt isolated. Being able to see them explain things, that it had a toll, that it hurt them. Like, this is hard. It changed my life. I'm so grateful that they shared that.

Sara Falconer: I'll dive in. I think you know it starts with the letters, right? That's how you're building the relationship. And I think that, again, we don't want to be doing projects on behalf of people. We want to do it with them, not just with their consent, but their excitement, hopefully, about what we're working on together. I think that's how you build a relationship. But then to find somebody who has something in common, in terms of how they want to do a project. That might be a piece of writing, it might be a piece of art or music. There's lots of different ways, I think, that you can explore depending on how much contact you have with them.

Or they might want do develop a web presence for themselves so that they can get the word out about their cases and things like that. Think about the skills that you have that you can offer, the resources that you have, or the things that you might want to learn by doing it. Think about what they need and are interested in, and then sort of try and find that spark that gets you excited about it. I can think about you guys talking about this project, how exciting it must have been to be like, "Yeah, this is something that we want to do together." And that's why you want to be able to find the same as if you're having a conversation with somebody on the outside that you want to have a project with. You can float some ideas and just see what sticks. There's so many resources in the community, from libraries to schools to whatever photocopying you can do at your work or whatever. So, take a little bit of stock of what resources you have and what skills you have and what you're excited to do and start sharing. If you're building a relationship with a prisoner, start sharing that. Say these are the types of things I'm really interested in, podcasts or whatever it is. That's a pretty cool way to start the conversation.

Eric King: Awesome. Josh?

Josh Davidson: Yeah. I would just say that finding that common ground, finding something that you're passionate about and that you're either interested in or good at doing, and that the incarcerated person is also interested in, whether it's artwork or books or music. Working with Oso Blanco, we're able to highlight this really beautiful art, and I'll just show it one more time because it is so beautiful. But he has supporters who also make music with him, who call in with him and create music over prison phones. And he's written two books with other people who support him. And there's hundreds of people in prison who have different ways that

can, from writing to prisoners outside that list, learn so much and stretch your understanding of the world and challenge yourself to see somebody else's reality, even if it's not the convenient one for you. You don't have to write to every single person. You can't. But to try on something a bit new, I think, is something that I would love to see people do more.

Eric King: I think that is great advice for life. Challenge yourself to think outside of your realm and maybe show some goddamn empathy to someone else. We just got a couple questions left.

I'm thankful that we're able to run a little late. I do get paid overtime for everything we go over, so I'm okay with it. [*Laughter.*] I am someone who has seen the benefit of prisoner support in life-saving ways. I met my wife through prisoner support. I met Josh through prisoner support. *Rattling the Cages* came from prisoner support. Sara, you are in my life because of prisoner support.

I've also seen it to where—how do I phrase this?—I've got a friend inside named Smiles, and anyone who knows me at all has heard me either talk about or post about Smiles because of the impact he had on my life, keeping me safe. The first person to write him on behalf of me was Josh. And currently, when Smiles is in trouble, when he's having problems with prison, the only way I find out about it and can help him is because Josh went out of his way to write him. Josh not only helped save my life, but now he's saving Smiles' life. And I think that is something that maybe people don't realize that can happen through prison support. The impact that someone like Sara or someone like Josh can have, not just on one person—because Josh didn't just save me, he also saved Rochelle and my kids. And he's not just saving Smiles, he's saving his sisters, his friends, his dad. There's a tree. There's a legacy of life-saving love that comes from prisoner support.

Besides just hyping you and Josh up, the question I want to ask is, how would you encourage people to take these steps to go beyond just letters? Because letters are great, but you two both emphasize doing more. You've both been part of broad projects that have affected countless people. What would you say to encourage people just to take it a little further, to go into that deeper, tangible support that can really have an impact? Josh, you go ahead and start, or Sara, if you're ready.

This isn't about *Rattling the Cages*, but it just popped up. In both of your time supporting people incarcerated, have you had many opportunities where people were able to share deep moments with you, beyond the artificial, beyond the surface? Have people opened up about hurts or sadnesses or fears?

Sara Falconer: Yeah. I mean, I won't mention anybody by name because, you know, that's obviously part of the trust that we've built. But the prisoners that I've been closest with over the years, I feel like we really do know each other. I tell them when I am feeling down or going through challenges or family illnesses or whatever it is and all the joys too. And similarly, when they're in the space to share, some of them really open up. Some people are more into an intellectual discussion and will say a little bit at the beginning or end about how they're doing, but are really more interested in talking about the book they're reading or what's going on in the world. And there's so much going on in the world that they can share insights on. Many of the prisoners that we worked with, for example, were passionate about Palestinian solidarity. They feel strongly about what's happening now, too, and have lots to say about that.

But I think it's like any friendship. These are friendships, deep friendships. This is not us doing charity work. We're not doing things on behalf of people. These are our friends and our comrades who we're working alongside. Hopefully, that means that we can be human with each other. It's not easy, all this. I'm not good at sharing my feelings. So how can I ask them to?

Josh Davidson: Yeah, I'm not either. But I do. You do see that through the bars. You do see people sharing their feelings. I feel like it's less so in letters, because those are so often read by guards. But if you can do phone calls or visits with people, then I think that comes through a little more, and you're able to convey, maybe it's the voices or face-to-face meeting that's able to convey that humanity and that level of compassion and empathy. But like Sara said, this isn't charity work we're doing. We're trying to build relationships and build up our movements in the process of doing that. I think bringing political prisoners or social prisoners—anyone that's locked up behind bars—bringing them into our lives and into our everyday realities in whatever way that is, whether it's writing a letter to someone, whether it's celebrating someone's release, or having them perform your wedding—as Eric did, luckily, for us this summer—

whatever way you can find to bring these people into your lives and into our movements is going to help everyone.

Eric King: I had a really hard time feeling safe to write people, because a lot of times when I was inside, it was always like there was bad things happening. Josh, our entire relationship was me being abused constantly. Not once were we able to talk on the phone or visit for the entire time I knew you until I was out. That made it hard, but you were able to make me feel safe enough, especially because you ended up befriending Rochelle [*Eric's wife*]. You took it beyond only me and recognized that support can also be family, it can be not just a prisoner, but the things that mean something to that prisoner.

Is that something that is a normal thing when you're doing support and you're close with someone, do you think about supporting their families, too? Or is that by request or just a random thing? How do you feel or how do you interact with the people you support, families or kids or things like that? I'm not asking the question right, but I know you know what I'm talking about.

Josh Davidson: It's an important question. For me, I think that, like I said, we're fighting for a better world. We're fighting to make our movements stronger. So, it's not a matter of supporting one person. It's not an individual campaign. It's a matter of supporting people in need and fighting state repression. That means supporting people in prison and also supporting their loved ones and people that are trying to help them on the outside, in whatever way that could be. You mentioned Rochelle, sometimes I would send Rochelle birthday presents and say it was from Eric. And just a small little thing like that can really make someone's day. Or just a card here or there, something like that.

Eric King: It's small acts of kindness that can help tear down these walls. I think we still have a Christmas card you sent her from me. So thoughtful. What about you, Sara? Were you ever able to develop relationships or support for some of the people you supported as families?

Sara Falconer: It really depends on the person themselves, the relationship they have or don't have with their family, and what they needed. There were definitely some over the years that I developed a relationship with, partially because we could share updates with each

I myself, I probably started writing out to prisoners who I thought were more like me, or more into the kind of into the anti-globalization movement and everything that was happening at that time. I think there's nothing wrong with starting there. But to broaden it, I learned so much from prisoners who are very different from me in terms of their life experiences and in terms of their movements. It's probably been the best thing that could happen.

Eric King: Josh?

Josh Davidson: What was the question again?

Eric King: The question was about if you've seen, in modern prison support, because you started writing prisoners about two weeks ago, if you've noticed any sectarianism or people focusing on writing one specific person for one action, but then not show broader support, and they'll leave it at this one specific thing? Have you noticed that? Or am I just a baby?

Josh Davidson: No, I don't think I've noticed it to the level you're talking about. I do think that people, like Sara said, they'll gravitate towards movements or people that they feel familiar with, whether that's earth liberation or animal liberation or antifascism. But I can't think of a single person that I know who won't write to someone else because they weren't involved in that movement.

Eric King: Because you only know grey-haired people.

Josh Davidson: Well, I mean, I do know people who wouldn't spend their time writing non-political prisoners, who feel like you only have so much time in a day. Certain people might think, "I will commit whatever time I have to people who are inside fighting for our movements or fighting back against the government." I wouldn't call that sectarianism either, but I do see that divide where people in anarchist circles will only want to commit their time to writing to political prisoners.

Sara Falconer: Yeah. It surprises me sometimes to talk to somebody who's interested in political prisoner support but doesn't really consider themselves an abolitionist of prison in general, or like they're not there yet, right? Those conversations can be pretty interesting, and I think you

people like Josh. Josh has hipped me to a lot of people. Josh taught me who Kojo Bomani Sababu is. Josh taught me who Kojo is because he keeps those names alive. He keeps them alive in his heart. And we need that. We need people like you and people like Josh to not let our elders become ghosts.

Josh Davidson: Yeah. I think that's interesting what Sara said, too. I guess a lot of people see the movements different, see them as individual movements here and there fighting for individual causes, but I see it differently. And I think a lot of people do. That's one thing that I love about *Rattling the Cages*, that it's got a such a wide variety of people, whether it's nonviolent Catholic protesters or people who shot cops, they're all in there.

Eric King: Shout out to everyone who shot cops.

Josh Davidson: They're all in there, and there's this thread of resistance that connects every single one of them. And it connects all of us on the outside with our movements. I think seeing that thread and making those connections is really important, and hopefully the calendar or *Rattling the Cages* can be a part of doing that.

Eric King: Question, Sara. And this is on the same topic we're having. Josh, you can answer next, as well, please. Something I noticed, I don't want to call it sectarianism in the movements, but I've noticed that certain people would only write to a water protector, only write to animal rights dudes, only write to this or that, and ignore everyone else. Is that something that you noticed when you were first coming up, or anytime, or is that just something that I'm fabricating in my mind?

Sara Falconer: I mean, people do gravitate towards certain people that they have that affinity with, like the cause that they're in for or whatever. There's also the names. At the time, there were some more well-known cases like Leonard Peltier, like Mumia Abu-Jamal, who were getting a lot of attention. And unfortunately, even with all that public support behind them, they are still inside. So, one of the things that I've always tried to encourage people if they're getting involved is, if I can think of people who are a little bit lesser known, or that we think are getting fewer letters, I'll often suggest thinking about writing to somebody different. It really depends though.

other. Like, here's news that we got, or maybe we got news or they got news, whatever it was to make sure that we're all on the same loop. We're all working on parole campaigns together. You need the family statements and the friend statements and all those things, and to organize together. I had some opportunities, for sure, to work with different families over the years. It's definitely so hard on the families and the close friends of people that are inside. Anything you can do to help them feel empowered, that they can be part of the solidarity if they want to, that they have supporters that are thinking of them so that they can take whatever actions that they want to, as well. But I think it's such an important point.

I want to ask you a question, Eric. You talked a little bit about some of the stuff that Josh did for you in terms of *Rattling the Cages*, the book. As a contributor on the inside, sort of the flip-side of the question that you asked us, what was that experience like? Are there things that you learned from it that you would take into other projects, things that really worked well or things that were frustrating, other than not being able to communicate very effectively for all that time?

Eric King: You turned it on me! Parts of the book really hurt me, because I was unable to do as much as I wish I could. I was under such restrictions that I couldn't talk to Josh the way I wanted to. Sometimes I'd be able to smuggle letters out to him, and he'd be able to mail me chapters and we'd go over them and ask questions together. But there were times where I felt like I was abandoning my friend, like I was giving him a job instead of a project, and it hurt me, because it almost felt like I was exploiting him. I don't know if I ever told you that, Josh. But the fact that he kept it going when I got put down, and he stayed in touch with Rochelle, we were able to go back and forth like that. It hit me on a really deep level.

And then when I read the book, I think I wept almost every chapter. You read Donna's, you read Linda [Evans]'s, you read Laura [Whitehorn]'s, Susan [Rosenberg]'s, Rebecca Rubin's. The book made me become friends with Jake [Conroy], basically. It taught me that I wasn't alone, and it taught me that the people that came before me and along beside me are such beautiful people. This isn't an accident that these people chose action, action as a cause to devote their lives to, because their hearts are so big. They couldn't contain all that passion. They couldn't contain all that love for the world. They had to act. So, yeah, I just felt it went beyond my expectations.

Also, it was supposed to be zines, and then it was going to be a little punk ass video series, which now is a really great video series. And that Rochelle contributed, Danielle contributed, people like you helped. At the same time, I just want to point out there are people in our movement, elder people, that were treating me and Rochelle like shit, that were discouraging it. They were saying don't, dude, it's stupid. Don't waste your time. They were telling Rochelle she didn't have a a role to play. Having people like Josh and Olive and Brian actually want to work to build something together, that was probably the first time I ever felt a part of a movement. And through that I was able to develop relationships with the people I admired most in the world, the people I mentioned, people like David and Herman and Ray. So, yeah, the book is a blessing. I love it to death. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my life besides my wife and kids, but mostly just my wife.

Now back to the questions. You both have been doing this for a while. Josh, for a couple months [*laughter all around*], Sara for over a decade. So, I would like to know how have things changed? How have things developed with email, with letter restriction, with access to video calls or phone calls? What has changed in the decades that you've been supporting people?

Sara Falconer: I mean, technology is an important tool, and even in the early days, like, you should see the god awful looking websites I was designing in 2002 to try and get this information out. Emailing so that I could reach people, like support crews around the world, other ABCs, other groups that were doing cool work, and just that ability to spread the word about these cases and get the writings out and get the art out. Like, that technology was always a piece of it for me. What we can't assume is that everybody has access to it, and that's in prison or not. Not everybody has access to technology or is comfortable with it.

That, I think, encourages us to find ways to bring those voices into our offline spaces as well. One of the things that I always say is that you don't have to have prisoner work as its own separate thing. If you're having a demo about an environmental issue or a labor issue in your city, there are political prisoners and other prisoners that will give you a statement to read that will be so powerful to that group of people that is gathering, and really inspirational. We've done this a few times, and Running Down the Walls is a good example of that, when you get people together and hear these powerful prisoner statements.

I think that there are ways to kind of bridge that technology gap, maybe visit with their families, visit with them, just keep that snail mail going, all those things. In terms of other changes, I guess this is going to sound weird, especially as long as I've been in it, 25 years or whatever, I'm still not somebody who's been in the movement for a long time. We have so many elders more elder than me who have so much experience, so much expertise, and so much to offer.

But, in the time that I was coming up as an activist, prisoner support and political prisoner support was more popular. Maybe that sounds weird, but it was very strange to be an activist that didn't know these names that we're talking about today, that didn't think of prisoner support as part of the work that they were doing, even if they were involved in immigration issues or environmental issues or whatever else. There was this thread running through it. Maybe there was a little bit of machismo and bravado in it that made it appealing to people as young anarchists too. There's a lot of different reasons probably. But I see young activists who are going in now, and they've got, I think, solid support, which is so important, so essential. We know that from doing years of prisoner support, how important it is to keep them supported. I don't know if I see people that will mention Bill Dunne's name or some of these longer held prisoners who are also very much part of our movements. I don't know, without just sounding like, "Get off my lawn."

Things are different now. I feel like it's on us a little bit to figure out what's happening and how we can make those connections and bridge that gap. Because to me, it's really a hot issue to get involved in. That does really sound like old person ranting, but ...

Eric King: One of the things that encouraged me to want to push this forward was I was writing people and they didn't know who Oso Blanco was. Or I write people and they wouldn't know who Sundiata Acoli was, or Bill Dunne. And I was like, "What the fuck are we even doing?" If you're writing me, you're missing the boat here, because there's people that have already been here, who are mountains of men and women, giants of people, who need love and support. I think that's real, and I don't know why that's happened. I don't know why newer people to the abolition game lose sight of the people that have been in longest. And then there are